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Mobilizing Iran: Experiences of the Trans-Iranian Railway, 1850-1950

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Mobilizing Iran: Experiences of the Trans-Iranian Railway, 1850-1950

by

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Dedication

For my parents, Noriyuki and Toshiko Koyagi

And for Richard M. Lewis

Acknowledgements

At the age of six, I began a daily solo commute to my elementary school via crowded rush hour trains, so from early on railways have been an intimate part of my life. Particularly growing up as I did in the Kansai region, Japan's second largest metropolitan area with more than fifteen million people whose primary mode of transport is the train, the social impact of railways is a subject that has interested me for a long time, albeit in a very different cultural context. In this sense, I need to acknowledge all the people that gave me memorable moments in relation to railways, from my high school friends who tolerated my company in a packed train every morning to my former colleagues at West Japan Railway.

I am most indebted to Kamran Scot Aghaie, my advisor. Kamran has been my greatest academic advocate for the long years I have worked with him. He has always been supportive, encouraging, and understanding. Meetings with him were almost therapeutic at difficult moments. He also gave me invaluable advice whenever I needed professional guidance. I only wish I had recorded all of them. I am truly grateful for all he has taught me. I thank Mohammad R. Ghanoonparvar for introducing me to the Persian language over a decade ago. Since then, he has always been my most valuable Persian teacher. I am also indebted to Yoav Di-Capua, who always gave me candid comments and encouraged me to explore ideas that I could not have thought through by myself. I also thank Benjamin Brower, who agreed to join my committee later.

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Mobilizing Iran: Experiences of the Trans-Iranian Railway, 1850-1950

Mikiya Koyagi, Ph.D.

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Supervisor: Kamran Scot Aghaie

Abstract

This dissertation examines how various groups in Iran planned, imagined, constructed, operated, and used railways from the beginning of the technological imaginary in the second half of the nineteenth century to the aftermath of the completion of the Trans-Iranian Railway in the mid-twentieth century. Specifically, it analyses the experiences of such groups as "Western" statesmen and entrepreneurs, the Qajar political elite, including travelers who went abroad, merchants, landowners, tribal laborers, foreign and Iranian railway workers, modern middle-class vacationers, pilgrims, and all sorts of occupants of the railway space. By discussing intensified state-society and intra-social interactions linked to the railway project, this dissertation argues that various segments of Iranian society actively interpreted the meanings of railways, took advantage of the opportunities they presented, and sometimes wove them in heterogeneous understandings of self, community, and nation. Thus, contrary to the homogenizing vision of modernists that existing scholarship tends to privilege, the Trans-Iranian Railway project created multiple experiences with railway technology.

Additionally, this dissertation makes supplementary arguments. First, by shifting focus from the centralizing state to non-state actors, it defies the temptation to narrate the history of railways in Iran through Reza Shah's policies (r. 1925-1941). Rather, it presents the continuation of social transformations before and during the Reza Shah period as well as state-society and intra-social interactions during and after the Reza Shah period. Especially, the hitherto neglected period of the Allied occupation and its aftermath was a crucial period of transformation in explaining how Iranians experienced the railway project. Second, this dissertation demonstrates the importance of transnational connections of non-state actors at various junctures of Iran's encounter with railways. In particular, it emphasizes Iran's connections with its surrounding world rather than with the "West," and thus resituates Iran in a broader regional framework.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

(Figure 1.1) Commemorating the completion of the Trans-Iranian Railway. In this photograph, Reza Shah is fastening the last bolt of the Trans-Iranian Railway during the official ceremony held in Sefid Cheshmeh Station on August 26, 1938. The COWI Archives, Iran Jernbaner Dias I, F58B, Photo No. 233.

Scope of the Dissertation

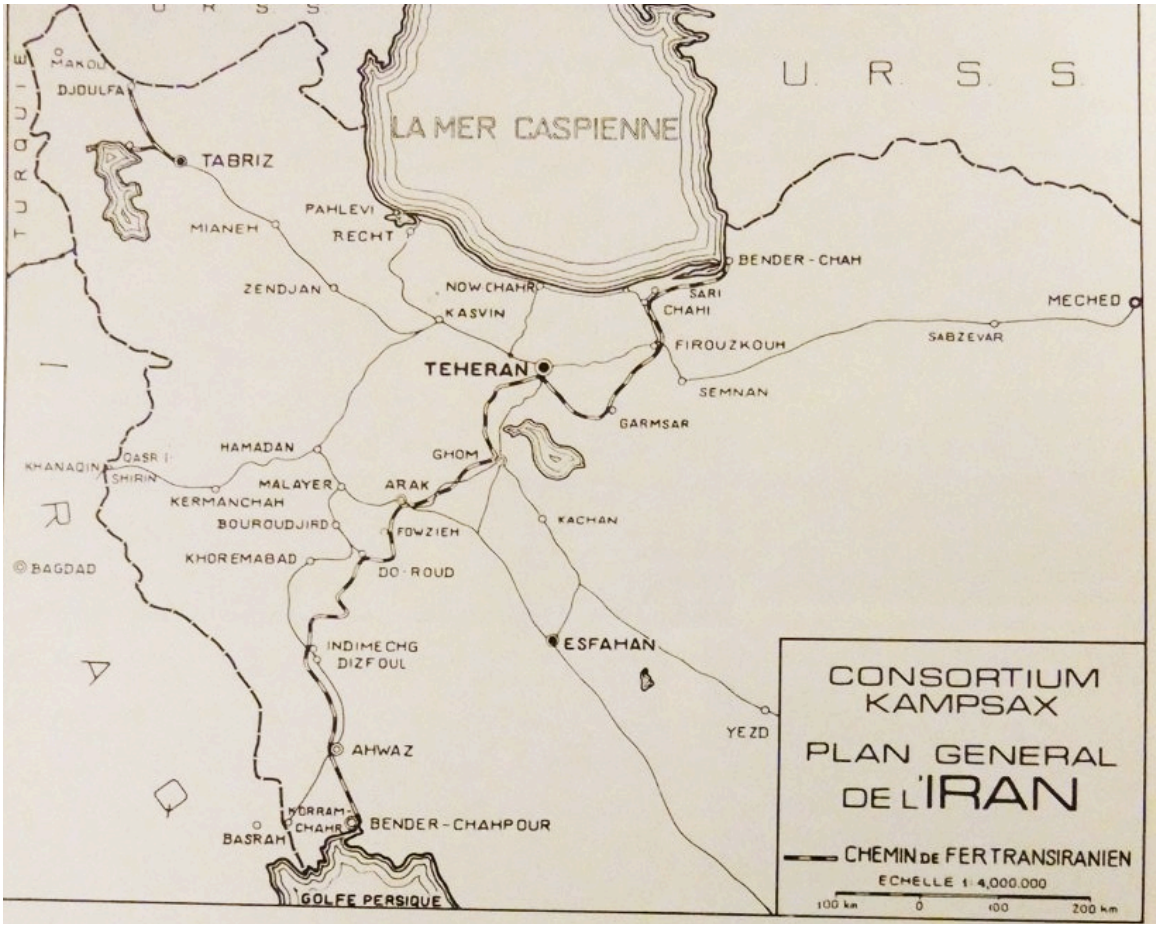
On the hot summer day of August 26, 1938, Reza Shah Pahlavi, accompanied by Crown Prince Mohammad Reza, departed Tehran in a royal train, heading south to Sefid Cheshmeh Station in the central Iranian province of Lorestan. That day, the small station standing alone in the wilderness was uncharacteristically busy to welcome the royal

family and prominent invitees who came down to attend the ceremony to celebrate the completion of the Trans-Iranian Railway. It had been eleven years since the inauguration ceremony for the construction of this first long-haul railway in Iran that connected the new Caspian Sea port of Bandar-e Shah (present-day Bandar-e Torkaman) in the northto another new port of Bandar-e Shahpur (present-day Bandar-e Emam Khomeini) on the Persian Gulf in the south, via Tehran. The royal train arrived from Tehran at 4:30 p.m., and Reza Shah and Mohammad Reza in their usual military attire descended on the specially decorated station for the occasion. The ceremony immediately began with the speech given by the Minister of Roads.

Embellished with a list of events and technical factoids, his speech included a rather dry and formulaic account of the construction of this first railway by the Iranian state. He stressed difficulties with the project such as Iran's mountainous terrain and its lack of expertise in railway engineering at the beginning of construction in 1927, which was attributed to the Qajar misrule prior to the 1921 coup that brought Reza Khan to power.[1] He also paid homage to the engineers of Kampsax, a Scandinavian consortium that supervised the engineering of the project since 1933, following failed attempts both by the German-American consortium and by the Iranian state without foreign assistance. Yet, according to the Minister, the engineering feat of building the Trans-Iranian Railway was ultimately the manifestation of the "great will power and ambition" of Reza Shah himself. It was "the product of the clear thought, wise plans, and capable resolution of

1 "Shahrivar," *Salnameh-ye Pars*, 1318 (1939): 70.

His Highness."[2] Throughout his speech, in numerous expressions, he exalted the Shah for leading the nation in realizing Iran's "seventy year-old" dream of having a national railway.



(Figure 1.2) Roads and railways in Iran, 1938. COWI Archives, "The Trans-Iranian Railway Planning, Design and Supervision, 1933-1938," in *Iran-Kampsax: Consulting Engineers, Architects and Economists*, no p.n. Highways are indicated in thin black lines, and railways are indicated in black and white lines.

2 Ibid., 69.

Following the speech, Reza Shah, along with Mohammad Reza, tightened the last bolt of the railway track and officially completed the construction of the 1,394-kilometer railway. Then, with his cutting of the tricolor tape, the first train from the south entered Sefid Cheshmeh and headed north toward Tehran. The notoriously reticent and sullen ruler was unusually loquacious and smiley that day. In his speech, Reza Shah repeatedly expressed appreciation for the sacrifices that the people of Iran had made for the railway. In particular, he said the following in reference to the hefty taxes levied on tea and sugar to partially finance the railway project: "I am extremely satisfied and happy with the people of Iran, who, from the bottom of their heart, made themselves available and willingly paid the expenses of the railway for the sake of reforming the country."[3] After the Shah's speech, the invitees were allowed to return to Tehran. The royal retinue, on the other hand, stayed in Sefid Cheshmeh overnight and departed for Tehran the next morning in order to attend an even larger ceremony to be held at Tehran Station in the presence of journalists, Majles representatives, notables, representatives of foreign governments, their wives, school children, and scouts.[4] Awaiting the royal retinue, the capital was decorated with Iran's tricolor flag and electric lights along the main streets. School children anxiously waited for the ceremony, in which they were supposed to line up with flowers in their hands. Tehran was in a mood of jubilation.

These celebrations were not isolated events in the 1930s. Throughout the decade, a frenzied series of celebrations were held in different cities every time a section of the

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[3] Ibid., 78.

[4] Ibid., 79.

Trans-Iranian Railway opened for traffic. The grandiose celebrations were amply covered in the censored Iranian press, making the Trans-Iranian Railway the most tangible symbol of Iran's success in achieving "progress" during the reign of Reza Shah Pahlavi (r. 1925-41).[5] The press also covered the completion of each of the major bridges and tunnels with photographs throughout the decade. In fact, since its construction stretched from 1927-1938, immediately followed by the construction of new east-west lines, this project, which was the most expensive of the early Pahlavi period, remained a subject of constant discussions for the entire Reza Shah period not only in the press, but also in the classrooms, public bathhouses, bazaars, and streets.

Yet, contemporary discussions of the Trans-Iranian Railway, including countless speeches and newspaper articles that praised the Shah, and to a much lesser extent the nation, concealed two salient features of the railway project. First, since they obsessively focused on legitimizing Pahlavi rule as the main vehicle of the rejuvenation of the Iranian nation, they paid extremely scant attention to how various groups of people experienced the coming of railways to Iran. The vague collective called "people" were relevant in these discussions only as consumers of such items as tea and sugar, which were heavily taxed by the Pahlavi state to fund the railway project. However, the railway project did not take place in an environment where power simply emanated from Reza Shah to the "people," who passively accepted the Shah's policy and paid taxes. Rather, the project

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5 For censorship in the Reza Shah period, see Karim Soleimani, "Press Censorship in the Reza Shah Era, 1925-41," in *Culture and Cultural Politics Under Reza Shah: The Pahlavi State, new Bourgeoisie and the Creation of a Modern Society in Iran*. eds. Bianca Devos and Christoph Werner (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 181-198.

was shaped and developed in a milieu consisting of a complex web of power relations amongst various state- and quasi-state apparatuses as well as heterogeneous segments of society, such as nationalist elites, landlords, tribal groups, the modern middle class, and railway workers, each of which had its internal divisions and tensions. How did the railway project, various apparatuses of the Pahlavi state, and these heterogeneous segments of society interact and impact each other?

Second, since the project was conceived as the symbol of national rejuvenation undertaken by the Shah and his people, the role of connections that went beyond national borders were largely ignored. Contemporary discussions often stressed how Iran successfully built the Trans-Iranian Railway without being colonized, giving concessions to foreign nationals, or borrowing from foreign banking institutions, while limiting references to foreign presence only to high-echelon engineers and managers of Kampsax.[6] Despite this negligence, transnational political, socioeconomic, and intellectual connections between Iran and other parts of the world played a significant role in germinating a distinctively Iranian experience with railways. In fact, the Trans-Iranian Railway project hinged upon the border crossing of thousands of individuals, including Iranians who traveled and sojourned outside their homeland and the thousands of foreign workers who temporarily lived in remote areas of Iran to survive the Great Depression.[7] How did these mobile populations impact the course of the project? How

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6 "Shahrivar," 82.

7 Southern Europe exported workers en masse to other parts of the Middle East before and during the Great Depression as well. See Joel Beinin and Zackary Lockman, *Workers*

can we situate the Trans-Iranian Railway project in a larger context in which the transport revolution worldwide had facilitated human movement on an unprecedented scale?

With these two points in mind, this dissertation examines how various social groups in Iran, both Iranian and non-Iranian, experienced the imagining, planning, building, operating, and use of the Trans-Iranian Railway between the second half of the nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth century. In doing so, it investigates how Iran's social whole, including the state, was transformed by the intensified social interaction facilitated by the Trans-Iranian Railway. The railway project offers a great case study of Iran's social and cultural transformations in the crucial periods between the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century because of the exceptionally broad impact it had on individuals from different class, ethnic, national, religious, and gender backgrounds. In other words, this dissertation ties together diverse social groups that are usually studied separately and presents broader transformations of Iran's social whole from 1850 to 1950.

In the rest of this dissertation, I demonstrate that the railway project increased spatial and social mobility in Iran on local, national, and transnational levels, in both voluntary and compulsory manners. The increased level of mobility was conducive to interaction amongst various state institutions and social segments in both urban and rural Iran. Moreover, because the railway symbolized state presence, individuals' multivalent understandings and uses of the railway, which were intimately linked to their

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on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam, and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882-1954 (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1998), 35-43.

understandings of the self in some cases, evolved discursively as their relationship with governing apparatuses evolved. Thus, the Pahlavi state's project of extending its reach to broader segments of the population through the railway was only partially successful. State presence became more normalized in the lives of ordinary Iranians by the mid twentieth century than it had been at the beginning of Reza Shah's rule, but this did not necessarily translate into effective control, since the population actively created meanings related to the railway that did not always conform to state's intentions.

In stressing the agency of social groups associated with new technologies, this dissertation moves away from the model of technological diffusion from metropoles to more peripheral regions in the early twentieth-century global technological hierarchy. Rather than being exported from one place to another without any critical reinterpretations, understandings and uses of the railway were locally constituted by active interpretations of those who encountered it. By "locally," I do not mean Iran as a whole, but competing interpretations of the railway that evolved within Iran, or even on a smaller scale, such as province, city, and village. Therefore, for instance, the understanding and use of the railway by poor pilgrims from Tehran could have been radically different from those of railway repair factory workers in Tehran.

At the same time, local, meaning Iranian, contexts delineated the range of possible options for how individuals interpreted the understandings and uses of railways. First, transnational political, socioeconomic, and intellectual connections mentioned earlier played a significant role precisely because Iran was a latecomer to the age of railways. Iranians witnessed existing models in other parts of the globe, which deeply

influenced their understandings and uses of railways. In fact, experiences of not only Europe but also neighboring empires and nations, such as Russia, the Caucasus, the Ottoman Empire, India, and Iraq played a pivotal role in shaping Iran's experience with the Trans-Iranian Railway.

Second, similar to other historical cases of railway booms, the construction of the Trans-Iranian Railway was concurrent with the process of state formation. Once the railway started to operate, however, the encounter of various communities with the railway was not necessarily in congruence with the process of state formation. The standard political narrative of Pahlavi Iran stresses the rupture between the abdication of Reza Shah in 1941 and the lack of central authority in the 1940s, which is often treated only as the prelude to the oil nationalization movement in the early 1950s under the leadership of Mohammad Mosaddeq.[8] Despite the scant attention paid to the 1940s beyond its political instability, the decade was a crucial period of sociocultural transformation, including the shaping of Iranians' understandings and uses of the railway. For one thing, although the grip of Tehran over the provinces waned immediately after 1941, various forms of interaction between railway-related institutions and local communities that had started under Reza Shah continued, and even intensified. The Railway Organization needed to restrict civilian traffic on the railway. The Allies bolstered surveillance of human and animal movement along railway routes. They also

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8 For political history of the period between 1941-53, see Fakhreddin Azimi, *Iran: The Crisis of Democracy, 1941-1953* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989) and James A. Bill and W. M. Louis eds., *Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988).

more than quadrupled the number of railway workers. Disgruntled yet silenced local communities under Reza Shah began to more freely voice their demands to state- and quasi-state institutions. All of these changes in post-Reza Shah Iran increased the interaction amongst state institutions and social groups in some ways, despite Iran's rather anomalous situation in which the central state was severely weakened in the middle of the railway project. Thus, the 1940s was not simply a decade of interlude between Reza Shah and Mohammad Mosaddeq. Nor was it a lost decade in which the chaos of the pre-1921 period returned. Instead, social interaction that was facilitated by the Trans-Iranian Railway project in the Reza Shah period continued and modified its course to meet the new political context during the 1940s and resulted in the stronger presence of state institutions represented by the Railway Organization by the end of the decade.

Iranian Historiography

It has been a while since historians first critiqued Iranian historiography for state-centrism and clear-cut divide in analyzing state and society.[9] The last two decades have witnessed an increase of contributions in social and cultural history of Iran that complicate our understanding of how sociocultural transformations occurred in modern Iran with close attention paid to the interaction amongst diverse state and non-state

9 For a recent critique, see Cyrus Schayegh, "'Seeing Like a State': An Essay on the Historiography of Modern Iran," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 42, no. 1 (February 2010): 37-61.

actors.[10] However, when we look specifically at transportation in Iranian historiography, this shift has not yet occurred, despite the railway's symbolic significance as the "epitome of modernity."[11] Certainly, the absence of the shift is partially due to the marginal position of transportation issues in Iranian historiography and the difficulty with locating sources that are scattered around the world. Nevertheless, the internalization of the state's point of view by historians and the subsequent framing of questions in accordance with the Pahlavi narrative of the Trans-Iranian Railway have also hindered the development of a social and cultural history of the railway project. For instance, despite its praise for ordinary workers who build monumental architecture, the second volume of *Tarikh-e Jameʾ-e Rah Ahan* (A Comprehensive History of Railways), which focuses on the history of railways in Iran, does not discuss how Iranian society experienced railways at any length.[12] Instead, for the most part, its concern rests on

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10 For examples of the nineteenth century, see Arash Khazeni, *Tribes and Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-Century Iran* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009) and Vanessa Martin, *The Qajar Pact: Bargaining, Protest and the State in Nineteenth-Century Persia* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005). For examples of the twentieth century, see Arang Keshavarzian, *Bazaar and State in Iran: The Politics of the Tehran Marketplace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) and Cyrus Schayegh, *Who is Knowledgeable is Strong: Science, Class, and the Formation of Modern Iranian Society, 1900-1950* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009). Other scholarship in Iranian historiography will be mentioned in specific discussions throughout this dissertation.

11 An exception in Iranian historiography is a very brief discussion in a subsection of a chapter. See Bianca Devos, "Engineering a Modern Society?: Adoptions of New Technologies in Early Pahlavi Iran," in *Culture and Cultural Politics Under Reza Shah*. eds. Devos and Werner, 266-287.

12 Mohammad Kazem Mokmeli, *Tarikh-e Jameʾ-e Rah Ahan, Jeld-e Dovvom: Rah Ahan-e Iran ta Enqelab-e Eslami* (Tehran: Ravebet-e ʿOmumi-ye Rah Ahan-e Jomhuri-ye Eslami, 2000), 127-9. See also Hoseyn Mahbubi-Ardakani, *Tarikh-e Moʿassesat-e*

visions of reformist intellectuals, state policies and relations between states, examined through discussions of various proposals and concessions in the Qajar era, most of which did not lead to actual construction, as well as a series of brief encyclopedic descriptions of short railways and tramways built primarily by foreign subjects. Likewise, analyses of the Trans-Iranian Railway center around political and military goals of the Pahlavi state to move troops speedily to volatile provinces, financial difficulties to cover the expenses for construction, and technological information, not around how diverse state and non-state actors interacted to shape the outcomes of the Trans-Iranian Railway project.

The two-volume history, written in cooperation with the Central Railway Library in Tehran, is representative of the existing approach to transportation in Iranian historiography that privileges political, and to a lesser extent, economic issues. Existing scholarship tends to be driven by a political narrative that progresses from the era of railway imperialism primarily in the Qajar era to the era of early Pahlavi-era nationalism that defied foreign domination. Thus, what characterizes the Reza Shah period is the tension between foreign interests and the nationalist regime's desire to assert itself, and the question becomes how this tension impacted foreign interests, particularly railway syndicates.[13] The political narrative is often supplemented by a macroeconomic narrative

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Tamaddoni-ye Jadid dar Iran, Jeld-e Dovvom (Tehran: Moʿasseseh-ye Entesharat va Chap-e Daneshgah-e Tehran, 1978).

13 For imperialism, Firuz Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia, 1864-1914* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968), idem., "Russian Imperialism and Persian Railways," *Harvard Slavic Studies* 4 (1957): 355-373, John S. Galbraith, "British Policy on Railways in Persia, 1870-1900," *Middle Eastern Studies* 25, no. 4 (1989): 480-505, idem., "Britain and American Railway Promoters in Late Nineteenth Century Persia," *Albion* 21, no. 2 (1989): 248-262, Paul J. Luft, "The Persian Railway Syndicate

that culminates in the formation of a national economy of the Reza Shah period, although the role of rail transport in this process was limited compared to other modes of transport and communication.[14] This strong focus on political and economic issues has resulted in the accumulation of knowledge about intellectuals' visions and political debates that involved a handful of intellectuals, the Shah, ministers, representatives of foreign governments, and Euro-American advisors and entrepreneurs.

Yet, our knowledge of transportation in Iran is limited to this particular subject that involves planners of the railway system in a broader sense, which included only a small fraction of the population. Existing scholarship does not illuminate how political decisions in the capitals were implemented, modified, or abandoned, by examining the interplay between new state institutions, their bureaucracies, and local intermediaries of the state, and various social actors who had no formal ties to the state. It does not address other important questions such as how various social groups attempted to influence

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and British Railway Policy in Iran," in R. L. Lawless ed. *The Gulf in the Early Twentieth Century: Foreign Institutions and Local Responses, Durham Occasional Papers Series 31* (Durham: Centre for Middle Eastern Studies, 1986): 158-215, and idem, "The USA and the Trans-Iranian Railway," in Markus Ritter, Ralph Kauz, and Birgitt Hoffmann eds., *Iran und iranisch geprägte Kulturen* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2008), 120-132. Steen Andersen deals with the tension between Kampsax and the nationalist regime of Reza Shah from a business history perspective. Steen Andersen, "Building for the Shah: Market Entry, Political Reality and Risks on the Iranian Market, 1933-1939," *Enterprise and Society* (June 2008): 1-33. For the Trans-Iranian Railway in the context of Danes and Orientalism, see Jonas Kauffeldt, *Danes, Orientalism, and the Modern Middle East: Perspectives from the Nordic Periphery* (PhD diss. Florida State University, 2006). For a brief discussion of Homa Katouzian, *The Political Economy of Modern Iran, 1926-1979* (New York: New York University Press, 1981), 115-6.

[14] For the role of transportation in creating a national economy, see Patrick Clawson, "Knitting Iran Together: The Land Transport Revolution, 1920-1941," *Iranian Studies* 26 (1993): 235-250.

political decisions, how they struggled to gain from railway construction in various ways, how and why they used the railway system (or did not use it), and how the social whole transformed itself through these processes. Instead, by its complete absence in existing accounts, it seems as if social groups lacked agency, either enjoying or suffering from the consequences of state policies passively. Furthermore, the absence of social groups creates a picture of late Qajar and early Pahlavi Iran in which the state was entirely external to society, not constituting a component of the social whole with connections to other social forms through various networks.

As noted earlier, in congruence with recent scholarship in other historical contexts,[15] the growth of social and cultural history of Iran in the last few decades has challenged such portrayals of society. The bulk of scholarship in Iranian historiography deals primarily with modern middle class men and women to demonstrate the complex interplay within the social whole. By rereading documents mainly in European archives, however, some historians have started to examine individuals and groups that lived in the social peripheries and who have rarely left written records of their own.[16] For instance,

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15 For a critique of the historiography of state and society in the Soviet context, see Mark Edele, "Soviet Society, Social Structure, and Everyday Life: Major Frameworks Reconsidered," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 8, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 349-73. Edele suggests that the Stalinist state comprised an integrative part of the social whole and was reproduced through everyday practices of individuals. For a case in nineteenth-century Egypt, see Liat Kozma, *Policing Egyptian Women: Sex, Law, and Medicine in Khedival Egypt* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011).

16 For instance, see Touraj Atabaki, "Disgruntled Guests: Iranian Subaltern on the Margins of the Tsarist Empire," *International Review of Social History* 48 (2003): 401-426, idem, ed. *The State and the Subaltern: Modernization, Society and the State in Turkey and Iran* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2007), Stephanie Cronin, *Tribal*

Stephanie Cronin's recent monographs write Iranian history "from below" and discuss how the "subaltern groups" such as oil workers, junior tribal khans, and urban crowds contested the power of the Pahlavi state. Importantly, while Pahlavi historiography vilified social groups that ultimately opposed the new regime as reactionary and backward, Cronin's accounts demonstrate the contingent nature of responses of "subalterns," who "neither received [Reza Shah's policies] passively, nor opposed blindly."[17] Her discussions also illuminate how heterogeneous modes of expressing discontentment coexisted among oppositions, such as filing petitions, taking refuge in mosques, closing of the bazaars, union-led strikes, and even banditry. Many of these modes of protest were salient features in expressions of discontentment related to the railway project.

Similar to these new studies, this dissertation examines how the expanding central state interacted with those in the social peripheries, but with a different focus. Historians like Cronin explicate the complex interplay between the central state, its local intermediaries, and stratified members of rural societies primarily through moments of dramatic confrontation. Discussions of social structures serve to contextualize well-known events in broader political changes, most notably the 1929 Abadan oil refinery strike and the 1929 tribal rebellion. This dissertation shifts the focus further to everyday interactions, in order to illuminate various ways in which ordinary people attempted to

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Politics in Iran: Rural Conflict and the New State, 1921-1941 (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), and idem., *Soldiers, Shahs and Subalterns in Iran: Opposition, Protest and Revolt, 1921-1941* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

17 Cronin, *Soldiers, Shahs and Subalterns in Iran*, 161, and *Tribal Politics in Iran*, 3-4.

evade state control through quotidian daily practices, which had a major impact on the way they perceived themselves vis-à-vis the central state and other groups within the social whole. The shift is particularly important because everyday practices of evading state control, if not outright rebellions, continued well into the 1930s, by which dramatic moments of confrontation between the Pahlavi state and its opponents radically decreased. This dissertation shows that various social groups continued to engage with the multilayered state during the decade of the consolidation of power for the Pahlavi state.

New Railway History and Its Theoretical Underpinnings

Until a few decades ago, the main fields of inquiry in railway history were predominantly economic/business history, and to a lesser extent, labor history. Considering the availability of sources left by railway companies, and the survival of many railway companies today, the focus on such issues as finance, management, and labor is not surprising. In colonial contexts in particular, scholarship generally stressed the process of technological diffusion from the metropole to colonies, assuming that technological innovations were uncritically accepted or rejected by colonial subjects. These approaches focused on "producers" of the railway technology in imperial capitals, and thus provided insights into how railways were planned by European imperialists, and how the

construction and operation of railways contributed to the formation of a global capitalist system with Europe occupying a dominant position.[18]

Reflecting the cultural turn in the broader discipline of history, recent historiography on railways in other contexts of the globe has expanded in multiple directions and has intersected with new fields. New scholarship in social history of railways illuminates how the process of class formation occurred through social engineering and how railways were constructed with significant deviations from utopian plans, resulting in both intended and unintended consequences on national or colonial social structures.[19]

Moreover, railway history has intersected with studies of technology and culture and mobility studies. The intersection between technology and culture has become a major area of scholarly inquiry as the focus of analysis shifted from production to consumption of technology. This shift has allowed historians to investigate how "consumers" or users of the railway technology, particularly railway passengers, experienced railway journeys. Because of the spatial mobility involved in railway journeys, scholarship that investigated the ways in which the spatial mobility impacted

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18 For classic studies of technological diffusion, see Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) and idem., *The Tentacles of Progress: Technology Transfer in the Age of Imperialism, 1850-1940* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

19 In particular, the case of both imperial and Soviet Russian railway projects to Siberia and Central Asia shares some features with the Iranian case. The similarities include: the crucial role of the central state as opposed to private companies compared to Europe and India; the civilizing mission envisaged by elites in the capital to transform the peripheries; the large-scale employment of tribal elements.

perceptions and representations of time and space grew significantly in the last few decades.[20]

More important for this dissertation are theories of the practice of users operating in asymmetrical power relations. In his study of everyday practices of users, who are "commonly assumed to be passive and guided by established rules,"[21] Michel de Certeau discusses the ways in which users invent new meanings and practices that are unintended by producers. Critiquing Michel Foucault's "microphysics of power" for privileging producers of discipline, de Certeau theorizes the ways in which the mechanisms of discipline are manipulated and proposes a critical distinction between strategies and tactics.[22] A strategy is a method of control employed by "a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution),"[23] who assumes "a place that can be circumscribed as proper (*propre*) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, "clienteles," "targets," or "objects"

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20 Following the pioneering scholarship of Wolfgang Schivelbusch, a number of scholars have examined literary and other sources to explain the practice of the railway journey, especially in British contexts. See Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey (Tetsudo Ryoko no Rekishi)*, trans. Jiro Kato (Tokyo: Hosei University Press, 1982 [1977]), Ian Carter, *Railways and Culture in Britain: The Epitome of Modernity* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), and Michael Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999). In Chapter Six, I will refer to scholarship that focus more on the everyday practice of traveling by train in relation to the notion of communities and the self within historical contexts that are more comparable to Iran, such as India, Russia and Mexico.

21 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), xi.

22 Ibid., xiv, and Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. A. Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977).

23 Ibid., 35-6.

of research)."[24] In contrast, a tactic is "a calculated action" without a " 'proper' (a spatial or institutional localization)" used by the people who are embedded in the institutional framework of strategies.[25] As such, whereas a strategy operates in its space, a tactic operates in the space of the other, and thus attempts to score ephemeral victories that depend on time. Significantly, the relationship between a strategy and a tactic is not oppositional. While the exercise of power by "a subject with will and power" is limited by the space that it controls, those who use tactics can exercise their power everywhere. Thus, the presence of a strategy necessarily invites a tactic, creating a mutually constitutive relationship between the two.[26]

In this dissertation, while paying attention to the ways in which the Pahlavi regime attempted to discipline the population, I shift the focus to "users" or "consumers" of railway technology. Thus, I consider how strategies and tactics evolved dialectically as the strategies that new state apparatuses attempted to impose on users/consumers were met with various tactics. I define "users" or "consumers" of the railway technology more broadly than railway passengers, because "using" or "consuming" railways does not necessarily have to mean traveling by train. Using/consuming the railway technology in everyday life can simply mean becoming aware of the existence of the technology, associating it with a particular mode of life, imagining how it can change one's

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24 Ibid., xix.

25 Ibid., xix and 37.

26 Ian Buchanan, "Writing the Wrongs of History: de Certeau and Post-Colonialism," *Span: The South Pacific Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies* 33 (1992): 39-46.

surroundings, and taking advantage of the socioeconomic opportunities that railways might create in one way or another.[27] For instance, construction workers encountered the railway technology before passengers did, as they built the track using construction material transported by service trains, consumed food and water transported by service trains, and moved from one site to another along the route in service trains. Likewise, local populations near Sari encountered the railway technology before the opening of passenger traffic when they came to see the new station building and became mesmerized by the bathrooms of first-class cabins.[28] Thus, even if many Iranians did not travel by train, they "used" the railway technology in that they encountered it in some way and constructed a technological imaginary that shaped their broader worldview and their place in it.[29]

Expanding the definition of users/consumers beyond railway passengers also allows one to think about mobility in a broader sense. Mobility in today's academic nomenclature has two main meanings that are typically used in two separate scholarly

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27 In a recent overview of everyday technology in South and Southeast Asia, David Arnold defined the "everyday" to include "merely knowing about cars, trains, and airplanes existed, recognizing them as familiar emblems of modern life on street hoardings, cigarette packets, and matchbox labels, in newspapers, magazines, radio programmes, and films" as well as "incorporating them into conversations, dreams, life-stories, employing them in a technological imaginary that ranged far beyond the practical possibilities of individual possession." David Arnold and Erich DeWald, "Everyday Technology in South and Southeast Asia: An Introduction," in *Modern Asian Studies* 46, Special Issue 1 (January 2012), 10.

28 IOR/L/PS/12/3409, "Persia: Memorandum of the Commercial Secretary of the Northern Section of the Trans-Iranian Railway," May 16, 1931.

29 For a case of the telegraph in the Ottoman Empire, see Yakup Bektas, "The Sultan's Messenger: Cultural Constructions of Ottoman Telegraphy, 1847-1880," *Technology and Culture* 41, no. 4 (2000): 669-696.

fields of inquiry. The first meaning is social mobility used particularly in sociology, and the second is spatial mobility, a notion more prevalently used in transportation studies across disciplines.[30] Despite the separation, the two kinds of mobility are in fact intertwined. In contradistinction with fluidity, which is a "movement having no particular effect on the individual," mobility is an "event-based movement characterized by the fact that it leaves its mark on the life history, identity, or social position of the individual in question."[31] Thus, by recombining the spatial notion of mobility with social mobility, this dissertation seeks to present a case in which the two were correlated. The concept of mobility does not lose its utility as an analytical tool by employing two different meanings that have different scholarly pedigrees. Rather, my aim is to demonstrate that the seemingly unrelated impacts of the railway system on different social groups in Iran can be explained by its destabilizing effect that often accompanied spatial *and* social mobility.

Defining both users/consumers and mobility broadly has several additional benefits. First, it allows this dissertation to take a holistic approach to the history of railways in Iran, which remains a largely unexplored subject. Unlike other historical contexts such as the United States, Britain and India, where the richness of historiography allows historians to specialize in a specific subject within railway history, Iranian historiography needs a broader study of railways that will invite further studies. Second,

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30 Vincent Kaufmann, "Mobility: Trajectory of a Concept in the Social Sciences," in Gijs Mom, Gordon Pirie, and Laurent Tissot eds. *Mobility in History: The State of the Art in the History of Transport, Traffic and Mobility* (2009): 42-3.

31 Ibid., 58-9.

examining various kinds of encounters with railway technology enables a holistic approach to the specific period under question, especially the second quarter of the twentieth century, when railway construction started. By investigating such diverse groups as the nationalist elite, tribes along the railway route, modern middle class vacationers, pilgrims, and railway workers through the case of railways, this dissertation provides a broader picture of social transformations at a particular historical juncture in Iranian history.

Sources

This dissertation draws on archival material, the press, memoirs, travelogues, visual evidence, and to a lesser extent, interviews. The archival material comes primarily from Iran, the United Kingdom, and Denmark. Some of these archival sources are now readily available for researchers outside Iran, such as the digitized proceedings of the Majles and thematically organized collections of archival documents that have been published in the post-revolutionary period. In addition to these sources, I use unpublished Iranian archival sources from the Majles Library (*ketabkhaneh-ye majles*) and the National Archival Center (*sazman-e asnad-e melli*). In particular, I extensively use Majles documents, which contain petitions submitted by various groups of people, including landowners, peasants, construction workers and their families.

Petitions can function as extremely useful evidence in studying the social history of modern Iran, where court records that historians of the Ottoman Empire often employ are either missing or are mostly inaccessible. Petitions can provide a wide range of

information, including local social structures, how diverse layers of the population perceived the ruler, the state, and their relationship to the state, and how the population tried to manipulate the powerful in their favor. As the case of nineteenth century Egypt suggests, the population (peasants in this case) could turn the ruler against oppressive local intermediaries by representing themselves as oppressed loyal subjects of the just ruler.[32] Similar calculations by the population that indicate a complex relationship between the central state and rural societies appear in other historical context, too.[33] Although studies that use petitions in Iranian historiography generally focus on the Qajar era,[34] by using petitions stored at the Majles Library and those published in the press, this dissertation considers the role of petitioning in the Pahlavi era, not simply as a sign of lingering traditions but as a constantly evolving institution.

Archival documents from the United Kingdom are British Foreign Office correspondence. In addition to informing my discussion of railway imperialism from the late nineteenth century, these documents give insights into how the Trans-Iranian Railway impacted tribal groups along the railway routes. Compared to the oil-producing Persian Gulf province of Khuzestan, which also had Iran's major ports, the British were less interested in Lorestan despite its being on the route from the Persian Gulf to Tehran.

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32 John Chalcraft, "Engaging the State: Peasants and Petitions in Egypt on the Eve of Colonial Rule," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37, no. 3 (August, 2005): 303-325.

33 Lex Heerma Van Voss, "Introduction," *International Review of Social History* 46 (2001), Supplement: 1-10.

34 For instance, see Irene Schneider, *The Petitioning System in Iran: State, Society and Power Relations in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006).

Nevertheless, their perception of Lorestan as a lawless land perhaps urged British officers to leave relatively detailed records of tribal politics and their changing relations with the state, which this dissertation takes advantage of.

The COWI Archives in Copenhagen, which possesses documents of Kampsax, the Danish-Swedish consortium that supervised the construction of the Trans-Iranian Railway from 1933-1938, turns out to be extremely useful for this dissertation. Some of the unpublished memoirs of Scandinavian engineers who lived in workers' camps in Lorestan provide us with fragmented yet vivid details of daily lives, including the difficulties that managers and engineers had to go through on construction sites, divisions among laborers, and how limited their direct interaction with native workers was. Furthermore, the photographs they took give us a glimpse of life on railway construction sites by showing what laborers' tents looked like, who exactly the laborers were, and how railway construction changed the landscape of rural Iran.

Among published sources, the Iranian press comprises the most important material for this dissertation. I use various hitherto unused newspapers and journals such as the nationalist newspaper *Nahid*, The Ministry of Roads' journal *Nameh-ye Rah*, and the Railway Organization's newspaper *Mardan-e Ruz*. Historians have pointed out the role of the Iranian press as a public forum.[35] Since each newspaper had a readership with a particular economic status and sociocultural orientation, historians can look into various publications to contextualize what was discussed in one publication in the broader public

35 For instance, Camron Michael Amin, *The Making of the Modern Iranian Woman: Gender, State Policy, and Popular Culture, 1865-1946* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), 9.

opinion. For instance, known for its satirical cartoons that mocked Iran's "traditional" culture, *Nahid* provides visual evidence on the perspective of the modern middle class that initially supported the rise of Reza Khan, while *Mardan-e Ruz*, offers an insight into issues that were highly relevant to railway workers. It is important to note that the Iranian press incorporated various genres of writings, including newspaper serialized novels, travelogues, and even reprinted petitions in the case of *Mardan-e Ruz*, which informed readers of similar problems that other railway workers and their families were facing. Admittedly, the novels and travelogues were not written by literary luminaries such as Sadeq Hedayat, yet their impact was arguably greater on the target audience of each newspaper. They were often written in simple prose and dealt with issues that were directly relevant to readers (such as a story of a modern middle class man being stuck in a carriage with an ignorant passenger and a nonfiction story about an embezzler in the Railway Organization). Particularly in the case of *Mardan-e Ruz*, since they were placed in libraries and salons of various railway clubs across the country, employees of the Organization were more likely to have read these stories than esoteric works by luminaries.

Structure

This dissertation combines thematic and chronological organizations. The next two chapters take a more top-down approach than the ensuing three chapters. They discuss the periods prior to the beginning of railway construction in 1927 to investigate the perspectives of officials and entrepreneurs of great powers as well as Iranian travelers

and nationalists. By doing so, these two chapters explore how the imagined mobility that railways would produce for their users became embedded in the discourse of the Trans-Iranian Railway prior to its construction. Chapter Two "Penetrating Qajar Dominion" revisits the issue of how imperial rivalries played out over railway construction. It shows how the belief in the transformative power of railways intensified mutual fear among British and Russian policymakers, leading to the thwarting of any trans-Iranian railway projects to secure imperial interests prior to World War I. The belief remained largely intact after the war, but it was the regime change in Iran that ultimately forced imperial powers, particularly the British, to abandon its versions of a trans-Iranian railway and accept a secondary role in the Iranian state-led project of the Trans-Iranian Railway. This chapter also demonstrates that imperial railway projects were attempts at carving up strategic and commercial spheres of influence from Iran's frontiers into interior Iran.

What the main historical actors in Chapter Three "Imagining a Trans-Iranian Railway" envisaged was the opposite of penetrating Iran from outside. This chapter traces how Iranians gradually shaped their perceptions of the transformative power of railways to create a nation with Tehran at its center, from which power would emanate to the provinces. Concurrent with the enhanced mobility of travelers thanks to such innovations as steamships and railways, the nineteenth century witnessed the surge of travelogues as a genre in Persian literature. Travelers who visited various parts of the globe outside Iran selectively witnessed how railway systems transformed the landscapes, not only in Europe but also in India, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire. Thus, the privileged mobility of mostly elite Iranians and their experience in neighboring empires

played a significant role in shaping the initial perceptions about what a railway would bring to Iran. By the 1921 coup that brought Reza Khan to power, modernists shared the assumption that a trans-Iranian railway would rejuvenate the Iranian nation economically and culturally, although the advent of automobiles had led some to cast doubt on the priority on railways placed by the new regime.

Each of the last three chapters of the dissertation focuses on a particular kind of experience of the Trans-Iranian Railway from the beginning of its construction in 1927 to the mid twentieth century. Chapter Four "Living Along the Railway Route" considers how local communities along the railway route responded to the changing political, economic, and social circumstances created by the project while attempting to shape the new circumstances in their favor. In particular, this chapter investigates the experiences of two different groups that were deeply affected by the Trans-Iranian Railway: landowners near Tehran and tribes in Lorestan. Both groups experienced an upheaval in relation to railway construction. Landowners near Tehran had their lands confiscated because of the need to build railway facilities, including Tehran Station, which lay outside the city at the time of construction. In the general context of Pahlavi efforts to strengthen central authority, tribal areas of Lorestan were penetrated by the railway, which consequently led to the influx of thousands of European workers and engineers and the employment of many Lors as construction workers in the 1930s. In both cases, the mobility that landowners and tribes acquired due to the project was involuntary in the sense that they had no other option. Yet, the experience of displacement did not immediately mean their resistance to the state. It was their attempts at engaging the state

that characterized the attitude of local communities, however limited they knew the outcome of the engagement would be. By engaging various state- and quasi-state entities through petitioning, they attempted to influence the outcome of the increased state presence, which in turn created a sense of normalcy in the presence of the state in their lives.

Chapter Five "Mobilizing Railway Workers" traces the formation of railway workers, especially those at factories and stations, prior to 1948, when railway workers' contribution to World War II was canonized in the official history of the Railway Organization. It makes two major points. First, the Trans-Iranian Railway project augmented the geographical and socioeconomic mobility of diverse groups of Iranians, who came to form the railway workforce. In particular, the flow of labor in Iran's frontier provinces and their immediate surrounding world such as Russia, the Caucasus, Turkey, India, and Iraq played a significant role in the early formation of railway workers. Thus, the symbolic nation-building project was built upon transnational connections of mostly non-state actors. Second, it shows how the discursive process of workers' socialization occurred in the specific context of post-Reza Shah Iran. Increased activities among workers after the abdication of Reza Shah in 1941 fostered workers' interaction not only among themselves but also with various levels of state- and quasi-state institutions, to which workers made demands based on their contribution to the Allied war effort. In response, the Railway Organization attempted to mold workers into loyal employees by monopolizing the sites of socialization and occasionally placating workers.

Chapter Six "Traveling Citizens" examines how Iranian railway travelers interpreted and experienced the new railway space in the specific political and cultural context of the early Pahlavi period and the Allied occupation. Despite the utopian imaginations of the Pahlavi state and Iranian modernists to create a replica of idealized European railway journeys, various types of local passengers developed their own understandings and uses of the railway that were rooted in their specific needs, particularly during and after the Allied occupation. Importantly, rather than displaying a homogeneously Europeanized nation, the railway space in Iran came to embody various divisions among various segments of Iranian society, who were forced to face one another in a confined space. The interaction among them was conducive to the shaping of national and class identities.

Chapter 2: Penetrating Qajar Dominion

(Figure 2.1) Map of Iran at the beginning of the twenty-first century. CIA Maps, Iran.[36]

36 For the map, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/cia-maps-publications/Iran.html (retrieved on March 21, 2015)

Introduction

This chapter traces how strategic and commercial considerations of competing empires resulted in the absence of a major railway in Qajar Iran. Despite the railway frenzy that hit Iran like most other parts of the world from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, railway projects conceived by European (including Russian) and American officials and investors did not materialize in Iran, with a few minor exceptions. The absence of railways in Qajar Iran does not, however, indicate their lack of importance to competing empires. On the contrary, railway projects did not materialize precisely because European and American officials and investors shared an understanding of the tremendous impact of railways in shaping political and economic networks of the broader region that surrounded Iran. For them, because railways represented "tentacles of progress," the routes of the railways had to be carefully controlled in order not to benefit their rival empires.[37]

As I mentioned in Introduction, scholars have examined extensively the politics of railway concessions in the Naseri period onwards. I will not provide a detailed account of all railway projects that involved the Iranian government, concessionaires, and various state institutions of imperial powers. Rather, in discussing the shared understanding of the

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37 I borrow the term from Daniel R. Headrick's classic work *The Tentacles of Progress: Technology Transfer in the Age of Imperialism, 1850-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). As the title suggests, Headrick focuses on the "transfer" of technology from Europe to Asia and Africa rather than the process of technological translation. The idea of technological diffusion is in congruent with the way European and American officials and investors understood the impact of their railway projects in Qajar Iran.

railway as a crucial technology to reshape imperial maps, I will highlight two related features of the politics of railway concessions in Qajar Iran. Firstly, imperial powers envisaged railway construction as a means to strengthen the broader regional and global networks of their respective empires. Thus, for them, railways in Iran did not have to be trans-Iranian railways that would run between Tehran and the provinces. Secondly, the flow of goods and troops that European and American officials and investors envisioned as the expected consequence of building a railway in Iran was primarily from outside of Iran to the interior of Iran. Although exploiting Iranian mines and exporting minerals out of Iran comprised one of the major incentives for investing in railway projects, most discussions centered around how to penetrate into Iran and how not to allow penetration by rival empires.[38] As I will discuss in Chapter Three, this assumption stood in stark contrast to how the Qajar political elite envisioned a railway in Iran with Tehran at its center as the best way to distribute goods within Iran and export them from Iran to foreign countries.

The Great Game and Qajar Iran

From the early nineteenth century, Iran faced the expansion of British and Russian Empires that threatened Qajar dominion. The Russian Empire defeated the Qajars twice in 1813 and 1828, which resulted in Iran's loss of the Caucasus to Russia. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Russian Empire expanded into Central Asia, notably

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38 For a discussion of the concession craze and the eclipsing of the economic frontier, see Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions: Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804-1946* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 75-80.

the capture of Tashkent in 1865 and the incorporation of Bukhara and Khiva as Russian protectorates in 1868 and 1873 respectively. At the same time, the British attempted to expand its influence into India's northwestern frontiers to bolster the defense of India against Russia. By the mid-nineteenth century, these efforts resulted in the placement of the Khanate of Qalat under British protection and the occupation of Sind and Punjab. Also, as a result of the Anglo-Persian War of 1856-57, the British succeeded in forcing Naser al-Din Shah to relinquish Iran's territorial claim over Herat.[39] As the two empires expanded in the north and south, Qajar Iran became increasingly caught in the Anglo-Russian rivalry in the late nineteenth century as a buffer state, which manifested itself prominently in the politics of railway concessions.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Asian railway networks of the British and Russian Empires started to expand in order to facilitate the movement of troops to frontiers and the flow of goods between the hinterlands and political, military, or commercial centers such as Baku, Tashkent, Quetta, and Bombay. In the Russian Empire, railways extended to both the western and eastern shores of the Caspian Sea, namely the Caucasus and Central Asia. In the Caucasus, the first section of the Trans-Caucasus Railway opened in 1865 from the Black Sea port city of Poti, but by the early 1880s, other major cities such as Tiflis, Baku, and Batum were connected by rail. On the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea, the Trans-Caspian Railway connected the coast to ʿAshqabad (Ashgabat) in 1885,

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39 For the Anglo-Russian conflict in Central Asia, see Firuz Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia, 1864-1914*, Chapter One. For an example of the increasing British presence, see Soli Shahvar, "Communications, Qajar Irredentism, and the Strategies of British India: The Makran Coast Telegraph and British Policy of Containing Persia in the East (Baluchistan)," *Iranian Studies* 39, nos. 3 and 4 (2006): 329-351 and 569-596.

connecting Mashhad by a carriage road only 150 miles away. Furthermore, in 1898, Russia decided to extend the railway that had reached Merv by then to Kushk, only fifty miles away from Herat.[40]

Perceiving the threat of the Russian move southward to Afghanistan, the British constructed railways as well. Generally speaking, institutions within the British Empire shared an understanding that European and Indian rail systems should not be linked if possible in order not to provide Russia with easy access to India. At the same time, however, the British Empire needed to safeguard British political and commercial dominance in the Persian Gulf region and its surrounding areas, whose cities were often land and sea transportation centers leading to India. For instance, in response to the Russian advancement toward Afghanistan, the British Raj constructed railways that ultimately connected Karachi and the garrison town of Quetta by 1887 via Sibi. Another line to connect Quetta with Nushki in interior Baluchistan was built by 1905.[41] Moreover, the line was extended along interior Baluchistan to Dozdab (present-day Zahedan) in Iranian Baluchistan during World War One to facilitate the transport of troops and war materials.

In this context of the Great Game in Asia, Iranian trade with Britain and Russia increased rapidly in the nineteenth century and shifted the direction of Iran's foreign

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40 India Office Records (IOR)/L/PS/10/787. "Quetta-Sistan Railway," from Austen Chamberlain to Prime Minister, August 4, 1916. Kushk is present-day Serhetabat in Turkmenistan, not to be confused with the town of Kushk in present-day Afghanistan.
41 IOR/L/PS/18/C/208, Minute Paper: "Persian Baluchistan, The Quetta-Nushki Extension Railway."

trade away from regional commerce with the Ottoman Empire, India, and Central Asia. Although the economic penetration of Qajar Iran by Europe was not as intensive as it was in other places such as India, the Ottoman Empire, and Egypt, Iran's process of being integrated into the global economic system as a provider of raw materials accelerated during this period.[42] Charles Issawi estimates that trade with Britain by land and sea routes of the Persian Gulf accounted for at least half of Iran's total trade in the 1850s and 1860s, while trade with Russia increased especially from the 1880s, and accounted for about two-thirds of Iran's total trade by World War One.[43] Thus, by the late nineteenth century, Russia's commercial priority was to consolidate its dominance in northern Iran by eliminating the possibilities of competition with British and other European goods, while Britain attempted to link southern Iran with its trading network in the Persian Gulf region to maintain British dominance. As will be discussed later, the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907 formalized the Russian and British spheres of influence in northern and southeastern Iran respectively.

Infrastructural development was at the heart of the process of integrating Iran into the global economy as a peripheral state. It was thanks to such innovations as the telegraph, steamships, and railways that empires could communicate swiftly and transport goods and people speedily between distant places, which greatly facilitated the

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42 For dependent development in Iran, see John Foran, "The Concept of Dependent Development as a Key to the Political Economy of Qajar Iran (1800-1925)," *Iranian Studies* 22, nos. 2-3 (1989): 5-56.

43 Charles Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran, 1800-1914* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 71-2.

intensification of global trade. For instance, recognizing the importance of connecting London and India after the 1857 Mutiny, the Indo-European Telegraph Department started to handle telegraphic messages between London and India in 1865.[44] Similarly, the British succeeded in strengthening their position in southern Iran through the 1888 opening of the Karun River to international navigation up to Ahvaz and the 1899 opening of the Bakhtiyari Road (also known as the Lynch Road) that connected the river with Isfahan through the Bakhtiyari territory.[45] Russia also received numerous concessions for road construction in northern Iran and built nearly 500 miles of roads (Tehran – Anzali, Tabriz – Jolfa, and Qazvin – Hamadan) between 1893 and 1914.[46]

Despite the general infrastructural development primarily by European entrepreneurs, most railway concessions in Qajar Iran ultimately failed. I will explain the reasons for these failures by dividing the period into three phases. The first phase is the period from the 1860s up to 1890, covering the intensifying competition between Russia and Britain that culminated in the Russo-Iranian agreement on the moratorium on railway construction in Iran, making railway construction impossible within Qajar dominion until 1910. The second phase is from 1890 to 1918, a period that witnessed the rise of Germany, which forced Russia and Britain to change their railway policy in Iran.

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44 Michael Rubin, *The Formation of Modern Iran, 1858-1909: Communications, Telegraph and Society* (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1999), 101-3.

45 For Karun River navigation, see Shahbaz Shahnavaz, *Britain and the Opening up of Southwest Persia, 1880-1914: A Study in Imperialism and Economic Dependence* (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005). For the Bakhtiyari Road, see Khazeni, *Tribes and Empire*, Chapter Three.

46 Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran*, 157. For transportation infrastructure in general, see Chapter Four.

Although imperial powers discussed several serious railway projects, the beginning of World War One postponed further developments. The last phase covers 1918 to 1927, when the Majles ratified the bill for the Trans-Iranian Railway, an Iranian state project undertaken by the German-American consortium.

Phase 1: The 1850s-1890

Since the 1850s, almost simultaneous with the expansion of rail networks in Europe, railways began to develop in Iran's surrounding world such as India, Egypt, and the Ottoman Empire, where the first railways opened in 1853, 1856, and 1866 respectively. The railway frenzy spread to Iran, too. From the mid-1860s, European investors and merchants began to envision railway projects in the Qajar domain. Also, Iranian diplomats, among whom were Mirza Mohsen Khan Mo'in al-Molk, the Iranian Ambassador to London and an ally of the reformist prime minister Mirza Hosayn Khan Moshir al-Dowleh, approached European entrepreneurs from such countries as France, Prussia, and Britain and delivered a sales pitch.[47] Thus, the Iranian reformist circle was involved in attracting European investment in railway projects in Qajar dominion from the beginning of the railway frenzy in Iran.

Despite their efforts, before the 1870s, most European investors were cautious about taking a risk in a railway project in Iran due to the small size of the Iranian market and the mountainous terrain of Iran that would drive up the construction costs. For instance, being aware of the riskiness of investment in Iran and his government's

47 Firuz Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia*, 101-3.

unwillingness to back his investment officially, the British railway mogul Edward W. Watkin declined an offer from Mirza Mohsen Khan to invest in a railway project in Iran.[48]

When approaching established capitalists turned out to be unsuccessful, Mirza Mohsen Khan attempted to convince a less reputable investor, Baron Julius de Reuter, a naturalized British citizen. Despite the warnings Reuter received with regard to the riskiness of involving himself with a railway project in Iran, he enthusiastically reacted to the prospect of great profits predicted by prominent figures within the Iranian reformist circle. In addition to Mirza Mohsen Khan and Mirza Hosayn Khan, these figures included Mirza Malkom Khan, who believed that attracting British capital was the surest way of achieving railway construction, and having a railway was believed to ensure economic development in Iran. Consequently, on July 25, 1872, Naser al-Din Shah granted Reuter a concession that Lord Curzon famously characterized as "the most complete and extraordinary surrender of the entire industrial resources of a kingdom into foreign hands."[49] In addition to the exclusive rights to build tramways and railways, including a railway from Rasht on the Caspian coast to Bushehr on the Persian Gulf coast via Tehran, the concession conferred to Reuter the rights for exploiting such natural resources as minerals and forests as well as for developing industry and infrastructure such as roads

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48 John S. Galbraith, "British Policy on Railways in Persia," 482. For Moshir al-Dowleh and his reform, see Guity Nashat, *The Origin of Modern Reform in Iran, 1870-80* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982).

49 George N. Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question. Volume One* (New York: Barnes & Noble, INC., 1892), 480.

and telegraph lines. Furthermore, Reuter acquired the rights for the first option if a national bank was to be established in the future.[50] Importantly, unlike many other concessions to come in the 1880s onwards, Naser al-Din Shah granted the Reuter Concession without pressure from any of the imperial powers. While the shah and his ministers may have been convinced of the benefits of the concession because of the gifts they received, the idea of having Reuter develop infrastructure in the Qajar domain was probably attractive, given the financial weakness of the Qajar state and Iranian merchants. In fact, when the shah asked for ministers' opinions about the concession prior to signing it, they replied, "Should you sign your blessed August name to this concession, one stroke of your pen will bestow upon the land and the people more good and truer existence than have been given them by all the Kings of Iran over thousands of years."[51]

The Reuter Concession encountered opposition, both domestically and internationally. Domestically, rivals and opponents of Mirza Hosayn Khan and some members of the ulama criticized the plan. For instance, Hajji Molla Ali Kani instigated

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50 Ibid., 480-1.

51 Cited in Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia*, 105. Kazemzadeh characterizes the signing of the concession as "the actions by the corrupt ruler and his equally corrupt ministers" and all the talks about "bringing the fruits of European progress to Iran" as "adding hypocrisy to treasonable greed." See Ibid., 108. Yet, as I will discuss in Chapter Three, the Qajar political elite often envisaged the development of infrastructure, especially a railway system, as the ultimate solution for Iran's political and economic problems. Also, in the context of the 1850s and 1860s, when European capitalists built railways elsewhere in Asia and the Middle East, giving the concession to Reuter in the absence of other suitable investors could have seemed to the shah and his ministers the only viable option to have railways in Iran.

fear by claiming, "With the onrush of Europeans into Iran, no mujtahid would survive. Even if some ulama did survive, what guarantee do we have that Mirza Malkam Khan or the company, with all the wealth it can amass, and all the men it can bring into the country, would not surround us with their troops and weapons?"[52] The fear that Europeans would come to Iran en masse and the ulama would be eradicated was directly connected to the railway clause of the Reuter Concession. He argued that the concession would give "a foreign company with the right to purchase land, which could lead to the invasion of the country by Europeans under the pretext of building railways."[53] Therefore, the railway symbolically captured the fear of the increased spatial mobility of Europeans and the consequent penetration of European power into Iran.

Russia also opposed the concession granted to a British citizen vehemently, using the term of a failed concession from 1864.[54] Thus, while Naser al-Din Shah stayed in St. Petersburg in the spring of 1873 during his first journey to Europe, Russia pressured the shah to cancel the concession.[55] Facing fierce opposition, the concession was ultimately cancelled by arguing that Reuter failed to begin railway construction within the specified time, and thus the concession should be nullified. The British Foreign Office considered the concession ill-conceived and declined to support him from the beginning. After the concession was cancelled, too, it continued to show little interest in the fate of the caution

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52 Nashat, *The Origins of Modern Reform*, 94. I retained the transliteration used by Nashat. Hence, "mujtahid" instead of "mojtahed."
53 Ibid.
54 See Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia*, 111.
55 Ibid., 114.

money of £40,000 that Reuter had paid the Qajar government as a sign of his intention to proceed with railway construction in a timely manner. Yet, at the insistence of the Secretary of State for India, the Foreign Office agreed to support Reuter's demand vis-à-vis the Qajar government to get the caution money back as a potential weapon to use against future Russian railway plans by citing that Reuter theoretically maintained his exclusive rights for railway construction.[56]

Once the Reuter Concession was cancelled, it was Russia's turn to make a move. During Naser al-Din Shah's visit to Russia in 1873, he met with Prince A. M. Gorchakov, Russia's Chancellor. In response to Gorchakov's opposition to the Reuter Concession, the shah stressed Iran's need to have railways, which would require assistance from another company should Reuter fail to meet the conditions of the concession. The Russian Foreign Ministry immediately found that company in a retired Major-General of the Russian Army, Baron von Falkenhagen.[57] Unlike the British Foreign Office that remained uninvolved with the Reuter Concession, the Russian Foreign Ministry encouraged Falkenhagen to pressure the Iranian government. With tacit state support, Falkenhagen sought a concession for a railway from Jolfa, which was soon to be connected to Tiflis by rail, to Tabriz, along with mining rights along the route. Thus, the railway was conceived to strengthen Russia's position in the crucial province of

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56 John S. Galbraith, "Britain and American Railway Promoters," 251, and Peter Avery, Gavin R. G. Hambly, and Charles Melville eds., *The Cambridge History of Iran, Volume 7: From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 189.

57 Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia*, 114.

Azarbaijan. The Falkenhagen Concession in 1874, however, included a clause that required the Qajar state to give up the customs of Tabriz for the duration of the concession, which raised a serious concern for Mirza Hosayn Khan. After failing to stall the deal, he, along with the Iranian Minister in London, Malkom Khan, attempted to bring the British in. Fearing the expansion of Russian influence in Azarbaijan, the British used the nullified terms of the Reuter Concession that gave Baron Reuter the exclusive rights for railway construction as a pretext to object to the Falkenhagen Concession. Since Russia preferred not to antagonize the British over the matter, the Russian government-backed Falkenhagen Concession was cancelled in 1875.[58]

After 1875, numerous attempts to gain a railway concession, undertaken by different groups of the British, Russians, Americans, the French, and Belgians, failed. Importantly, Naser al-Din Shah actively advocated some of the potential concessionaires and their railway projects, including Tholozan, his French physician. The shah met with interested investors in Paris during his second trip to Europe in 1878, and on different occasions, spoke favorably about the immediate granting of a concession to have a railway built in his dominion as soon as possible. Nevertheless, Anglo-Russian objections led to the failure of these attempts. In particular, in the case of the Tholozan project, the fear of the French obtaining the rights for railway construction in southwestern Iran, accompanied by the rights for cultivation of land from Ahvaz down to the Persian Gulf, alarmed the British. In another case, in which a Frenchman attempted to gain a concession to build a railway from Anzali to Tehran, Russia objected to the plan for fear

58 Ibid., 134-147.

of having competition with its own railway development in the Caucasus, while Britain objected for fear of losing its market in Tehran and central Iran.[59] The two imperial powers effectively blocked the concession by pressuring Iran. Thus, as the first few decades of the politics of railway concessions illustrate, in the cancellation of railway concessions, the fear of the railway's transformative power in reshaping the balance of power played an important role. The ulama, Russians, and the British feared the increased influence of their rivals along the railway route and objected to railway projects in the Qajar domain.

An exception among attempts at obtaining a railway concession was the concession granted to a Belgian company, which ultimately led to the 1888 opening of an eight-kilometer tramway from Tehran to the nearby shrine of Shah ʿAbd al-ʿAzim. The successful completion of the tramway resulted partially from efforts of the Qajar court to bring in a third power other than Russia and Britain, which aggressively pursued the promotion of British commercial activities since the mid-1880s under the new Conservative government, with Henry Drummond Wolff as the minister in Tehran. Among the newcomers to commercial endeavors in Iran were American companies, whose government opened a legation in Tehran in 1882.[60] American plans for railway construction, including the 1886 plan to connect Mohammareh (present-day Khorramshahr) and Tehran and Clergue's 1889 plan to connect Alexandretta (present-day

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59 Ibid., 156-160, Thomson to Salisbury, September 20, 1878, Foreign Office (FO)881/3821.

60 Galbraith, "British and American Railway Promoters," 251-5.

İskenderun) and India, were blocked by Britain and Russia.[61] As was the case with previous railway projects, Britain needed to keep the virtual monopoly in political and commercial influence in the Persian Gulf, and Russia feared that connecting the Persian Gulf with Tehran could facilitate the entry of European goods into interior Iran and pose threat to the Russian dominance in central and northern Iran. While American plans fell through, Iran's efforts to attract investment from countries other than Britain and Russia succeeded when a French concessionaire Fabius Boital acquired the concession to build a tramway from Tehran to Shah ʿAbd al-ʿAzim in late 1886. Possibly due to the lack of capital, however, Boital sold the concession to a Belgian company, which included the rights to build a railway from Qazvin to Qom via Tehran and Shah ʿAbd al-ʿAzim.[62] The Belgian company constructed the Tehran-Shah ʿAbd al-ʿAzim tramway first and opened it in 1888. Furthermore, the Belgian company made a proposal to the shah to build a railway from the Caspian Sea to Tehran, although this proposal was retracted due to fierce British and Russian opposition.

While railway projects within Qajar dominion mostly fell apart, the British and Russian Empires had extended railways to the frontiers of Iran by the mid-1880s. As mentioned earlier, it was in the 1880s that the Russian rail network was extended to

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61 For Clergue's proposal to connect the Mediterranean coast of Alexandretta with India via Baghdad and Dezful, see FO881/10114X, Political Department, India Office, "Memorandum on Persian Railways," June 20, 1911, page 3.

62 For the tramway, see Mahbubi-Ardakani, Hosayn, *Tarikh-e Moʿassesat-e Tamaddoni-ye Jadid dar Iran, Jeld-e Dovvom* (Tehran: University of Tehran Press, 1978), 323-4, and the Encyclopedia Iranica entry, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/railroads-i (retrieved on January 25, 2015).

ʿAshqabad (1885), and the Indian rail network to Quetta (1887). Combined with the attempts by the French, Belgians, and Americans to obtain concessions and the rapid growth of Russian trade with Iran, there was a heightened sense of competition among various contenders. Particularly worrisome to Iran was the increased Russian presence in the crucial province of Khorasan due to the 1885 railway extension to ʿAshqabad as well as the 1888 Muscovite capitalists' plan to construct a trans-Iranian railway from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf. The perceived threat of Russia convinced Naser al-Din Shah to get closer to the British.

In pursuit of a major commercial gain for the British, Wolff claimed that the Belgian concession violated Reuter's rights from the 1872 concession and demanded some form of compensation.[63] The result was the 1888 secret agreement with the British issued by Naser al-Din Shah that promised the British preferential rights in a railway project from Tehran southwards. Also, it was guaranteed that if a non-British company acquired a railway concession for northern Iran, a British company would gain a concession for a Tehran-Shushtar railway.[64] Furthermore, within a month from this agreement, the opening of the Karun River to international traffic from the Persian Gulf up to Ahvaz was proclaimed in October of 1888. The opening of the Karun River was a major victory for Britain, as it would enable Britain to strengthen its influence in southwestern Iran and its interior lands. Moreover, the concession for the establishment

63 Galbraith, "British Policy on Railways," 492.

64 FO881/9290, "Memorandum respecting Persian Undertakings as to British Railway Construction in Persia," September 1908.

of the Imperial Bank of Persia was granted to Baron Reuter at the beginning of 1889. The establishment of the bank was meant to pave the way for other projects in mining and railway construction.

As a railway enthusiast, Wolff was especially interested in railway concessions in Iran. Along with other concessions, he dreamed of building an extensive railway system in Iran and, in the hope of striking a railway concession, arranged for Naser al-Din Shah to meet with the business community of London during his stay in the summer of 1889. Unlike many of his colleagues, Wolff believed that giving Russia access to the Persian Gulf through railway construction, especially an Anzali-Tehran-Mohammareh railway with British and Russian capital, would lead to an Anglo-Russian détente through a practical economic partition of Iran and result in protecting British interests.[65] Wolff's advocacy of railway construction in Iran was not limited to the Caspian Sea-Persian Gulf route. He also argued for a Quetta-Sistan railway via Nushki (in today's Pakistani province of Baluchistan) in conjunction with a concession to a British citizen, possibly Reuter, for irrigation in Sistan. In making a case for the project to the Government of India and Lord Salisbury, Wolff claimed that the railway would counter the Russian Trans-Caspian Railway and also make transporting troops from India easy and speedy in case of a Russian military move toward India.[66] Neither the Government of India nor Lord Salisbury were enthusiastic about Wolff's idea of the Quetta-Sistan railway at this

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65 Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia*, 221-2.

66 FO881/9230X, Henry Drummond Wolff to Lord Salisbury, November 18, 1888, and February 19, 1889.

point, and Wolff's imagination, which was characterized as "suffused with halcyon dreams of a regeneration of Persia by universal railways," did not materialize.[67]

Wolff's dream of a trans-Iranian railway also did not materialize. In response to the opening of the Karun River, Russia was going to demand comparable concessions to balance out the advantage that the British had won in southern Iran. Yet, Russia ultimately decided to stop any railway construction in Iran, which would maintain the status quo and allow Russia to postpone difficult decisions. In a ministerial meeting of early 1890, while the Minister of Ways of Communication supported Muscovite capitalists and claimed that delaying railway construction would benefit the British, the Minister of War disagreed. He argued that the first railway to be built should connect the Caucasus with Tabriz in order to strengthen Russia's strategic position. Furthermore, the Ministers of Finance and Foreign Affairs both opposed building railways in Iran, believing that railways in Iran would allow the entry of European goods into the Russian stronghold of the Iranian market. Ivan Alekseevich Zinov'ev, the Russian Minister in Tehran, made several arguments against railway construction in Iran. He pointed out the financial unviability of a trans-Iranian railway that depended on the expected Indo-European trade volume, because the existing Suez Canal route would be faster and cheaper for Britain, the main trading partner with India that would avoid the route going through Russia anyway. Furthermore, without a naval station on the Persian Gulf, Russia

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67 IOR/L/PS/10/787, "Quetta-Seistan Railway," From Austen Chamberlain to Prime Minister, August 4, 1916.

would not be able to protect the southern part of a trans-Iranian railway.[68] Later in the same year, in November of 1890, the new Russian Minister in Tehran and Amin al-Soltan, the Iranian Prime Minister, signed an agreement that included a clause that banned any railway construction in Iran for the next ten years, which was later extended for another ten years until 1910.[69]

Thus, the intensification of Anglo-Russian rivalries over railway construction during the 1880s culminated in the imposition of the moratorium period. For Naser al-Din Shah, this moratorium saved him from having to give out a series of compensating concessions in order to satisfy both the British and the Russians. Furthermore, although the agreement disappointed competing capitalists, it served the purpose of maintaining the status quo for both British and Russian governments. Despite the existence of diverging opinions within both imperial governments, as is indicated by Wolff's advocacy for railways in Iran, for both imperial governments, it was far more desirable to keep Iran difficult to access for all parties than to improve access to Iran and potentially benefit their imperial rivals. Therefore, both the British and the Russians chose to maintain the status quo in which Iran was without railways as long as possible. Nevertheless, it was not a fundamental solution to the question of how the British and the Russians could reach an agreement over Iran. As Lord Curzon noted, "[t]hat a country

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68 Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia*, 231-5.

69 FO881/10114X, Political Department, India Office, "Memorandum on Persian Railways," June 20, 1911, page 5.

affecting a high civilisation can permanently resist civilisation's choicest agency and most powerful means of influence is out of the question."[70]

Phase 2: 1890-1918

In February 1911, Lieutenant-Colonel A. C. Yate, the former consul in Muscat, gave a lecture at the Central Asian Society in London. His lecture revolved around a trans-Iranian railway project, a topic that had been rekindled recently in response to a visit to London by a Russian railway promoter who proposed the establishment of an international company to undertake the project with equal Anglo-Russian participation.[71] The trans-Iranian railway scheme had an endorsement from Russian bankers, business interests in railway and construction industries, and members of the Duma, the Russian Parliament. Also, it had already secured support from French bankers and would lead to the foundation of the *Société d'Etudes* du Chemin de Fer Transpersan in 1912, endorsed by the governments of France, Russia, and Britain.[72] Yet, it did not materialize due to a familiar set of problems such as opposition from British government authorities such as the Government of India and the War Office, the difficulty of financing the project, and shifting priorities within the Russian government. Furthermore, the outbreak of World War One and the 1917 Russian Revolution put a final stop to the project.

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70 Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, 638.

71 A. C. Yate, "The Proposed Trans-Persian Railway by Lieutenant-Colonel A. C. Yate," *Proceedings of the Central Asian Society* (February, 1911): 9-10.

72 IOR/L/PS/10/417, From Revelstoke, Director of the Société d'Etudes to the Under Secretary of State, Foreign Office, August 5, 1932.

Unlike elements within the British Empire who expressed concerns with the trans-Iranian railway scheme on the grounds that it would give Russia direct access to India, Yate saw the project as beneficial to the British Empire. The trans-Iranian railway that Russians proposed was to enter Iran from Baku along the Caspian Sea, and continue to India via Rasht, Qazvin, Tehran, Yazd, and Kerman, with a branch line to Khaneqin, the Irano-Ottoman border town in present-day Iraq, via Kermanshah. Therefore, it would connect Calais in France all the way to Calcutta, making the trans-Iranian railway the bridge between "East and West."[73] Yate continued:

> In the carrying out of this scheme Persia may be no more for the moment than the instrument of the ambitions of greater powers; but none the less the prospect is full of promise for her, and if ever she has the opportunity of reviving the past glories of Naushirwan and Shah Abbas, this is it.[74]

Yate believed that the past glories of Iran stemmed from its role as the passageway between Europe and Asia, and thus reviving that role would bring prosperity back to Iran, especially to Sistan and Khorasan, where Britain needed to commercially compete with Russia. He went on to argue that strategic calculations should be overruled in the face of Britain's responsibility to "open up" Iran and bring "civilization" to it, as it had been

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[73] Yate, "The Proposed Trans-Persian Railway," 11 and 16.
[74] Ibid., 17.

doing for over a century in such enterprises as the navigation of the Karun River.[75] Therefore, his vision of a railway project in Iran assumed several points. First, Iran would regain prosperity thanks to the passing of the trans-Iranian railway. Second, even though the railway would go through Tehran partly to make the project more acceptable to the newly-established Majles, Iran was not important as a destination of its own. It simply lay en route to India from Europe. Third, the goal was to "open up" Iran from outside. Rather than creating a web of infrastructure emanating from Tehran as Iranian modernists imagined (see Chapter Three), Yate imagined that the railway would allow Europeans to penetrate the Iranian market.

As the failed project of the trans-Iranian railway illustrated, debates about railway construction in Iran came back to center stage when the expiration of the moratorium in 1910 approached. At the same time, changes in the international context forced both the British and Russian governments to change their policies in Iran. Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese war and the revolution of 1905 temporarily destabilized the Russian Empire, making it more susceptible to negotiations with the British over Asian issues, so that it could concentrate on European matters. In the meantime, German influence in the Middle East was rapidly growing. In particular, the German government was heavily involved in railway projects in the Ottoman Empire, including the Baghdad Railway, which, once completed, would connect Berlin with Basra via Istanbul, Aleppo, and

75 Ibid., 9 and 19.

Baghdad.[76] The Baghdad Railway project, whose construction started in 1903, threatened British dominance in the Persian Gulf. It would divert at least some traffic from the Suez Canal route and give Germany direct access to the Persian Gulf. For Russia, too, the Baghdad Railway could compromise the Russian advantage in the northern Iranian market, particularly if Germany extended a branch line from Khaneqin on the Baghdad Railway to Tehran.

The result of these circumstances was the 1907 Anglo-Russian Agreement, which formalized Anglo-Russian relations over Tibet, Afghanistan, and Iran and thus allowed Britain and Russia to face the rise of Germany.[77] Based on the agreement, despite the lip service paid to Iran's integrity and independence, Iran was divided into de facto spheres of influence. The Russian sphere of influence was defined as north of the line connecting Qasr-e Shirin, Isfahan, Yazd, and the meeting point of the Afghan and Russian borders. The British sphere of influence was in southeastern Iran from the Afghan border, Birjand, Kerman, and Bandar Abbas. The area in between was the neutral sphere. While the agreement granted Russia exclusive access to concessions in the north, Britain got the same in the southeast, and both states attempted to exclude German enterprises from their respective spheres of influence.

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76 For the Baghdad Railway, see Jonathan S. McMurray, *Distant Ties: Germany, the Ottoman Empire, and the Construction of the Baghdad Railway* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2001).

77 For a recent account of the 1907 Agreement, see Mansour Bonakdarian, *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911: Foreign Policy, Imperialism, and Dissent* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006), Chapter 3: The Ritual of Sacrifice and the Will to Resist.

After the 1907 Anglo-Russian Agreement, in order to diminish the significance of the Baghdad Railway, Britain and Russia engaged in some discussions about possible joint ventures in commence after the end of the moratorium, such as the British-built southern line from Mohammareh to Khorramabad in the neutral zone and the Russian-built northern line from Khorramabad to Jolfa via Soltanabad, Tehran, and Tabriz. Correspondence between the Consul in Ahvaz and the Political Resident in Bushehr mentioned preliminary discussions for the project, including the plan to calculate the cost of local labor, land acquisition, irrigation, and the need to ensure security through Shaykh Khaz'al, the local ruler of Mohammareh.[78] At this point, the British priority was clearly on the line from Mohammareh northwards, ideally to Tehran, in order to bring central Iranian cities closer to the British stronghold of the Persian Gulf, while another large central Iranian market of Isfahan was served by the British enterprise of the Bakhtiyari Road from Ahvaz.

While cooperating with the British, Russia also needed to placate Germany. Germany had attempted unsuccessfully to forestall the Anglo-Russian Agreement by proposing that Germany would restrict itself to pursue only commercial interests in Iran and refrain from railway construction in northern Iran if Russia built a branch line from Khaneqin to Tehran. Although Russia preferred that no railway be built in Iran, it needed to improve relations with the growing German Empire, which had other issues with Russia such as the Balkan problem. Thus, Russia reached an agreement with Germany in

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78 IOR/L/PS/10/177, "Memorandum on the Mohammerah-Dizful Section of the Projected Mohammerah-Julfa Railway," from A. T. Wilson, Acting Consul for Arabistan, to the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, Bushire, September 21, 1910.

Potsdam in 1911, in which Germany acknowledged Russia's special interests in Iran and agreed not to pursue concessions in northern Iran. In return, Russia agreed to build the Khaneqin-Tehran Railway that would be linked to the Baghdad Railway.[79] Russia's strategy behind the agreement was to delay as much as possible undertaking the railway construction and hope that the international situation would change and let Russia off the hook, since the railway would allow the penetration of German goods into northern Iran and threaten Russia's commercial position. Given that it would take at least another decade or more to complete the Baghdad Railway, that seemed to be the least undesirable option.

Unaware of Russia's intent, Britain was alarmed by the agreement and attempted to obtain a concession independently for a railway from Mohammareh to Khorramabad, which lay just south of the demarcation line of the neutral zone and the Russian sphere of influence. The railway would make the Russo-German plan of the Tehran-Khaneqin Railway meaningless by linking central Iranian cities as far as Hamadan and Kermanshah to the Persian Gulf by the railway and roads, thereby turning them into solid markets for British cotton goods.[80] In order to obtain a concession for this railway, various British enterprises, including representatives of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, the Imperial Bank of Persia, the British India Steam Navigation Company, and the Euphrates and

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79 Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia*, 592-6.

80 IOR/L/PS/10/177, From C. Greenway to Louis Mallet, Foreign Office, January 7, 1911.

Tigris Steam Navigation Company, established the Persian Railway Syndicate in 1911.[81] In the same year, the syndicate composed a draft of the application for the concession, which included railway lines from Mohammareh or Khormusa (later renamed Bandar-e Shahpur) to Khorramabad or Borujerd, Bandar Abbas to Kerman, Bandar Abbas to Shiraz, and Bandar Abbas to Mohammareh.[82] In 1913, the syndicate obtained the option for the Mohammareh-Khorramabad Railway, which would follow the Iranian government's final decision based on a preliminary survey that the syndicate was to undertake.[83]

While the British proceeded with the Mohammareh-Khorramabad Railway, Russia shifted its priority to the Jolfa-Tabriz Railway, which did not face British opposition since the line remained within the Russian sphere of influence. Moreover, the line was much easier to finance than the trans-Iranian railway, which was later characterized as "chimerical" by C. P. Skrine, the British Consul for Sistan and Qa'en in the 1920s.[84] After obtaining the concession, Russia constructed the Tabriz-Jolfa Railway and completed it in 1916 in the midst of World War One.

While the Tabriz-Jolfa Railway was completed despite the outbreak of World War One, other projects such as the Mohammareh-Khorramabad Railway came to a halt,

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81 IOR/L/PS/10/177, From Edward Grey to G. Barclay, August 15, 1911.

82 IOR/L/PS/10/177, "Contract between the Persian Government and the Persian Railway Syndicate," from C. Greenway to Louis Mallet, Foreign Office, September 7, 1911.

83 Luft, "The Persian Railway Syndicate," 189.

84 IOR/L/PS/10/787, "Memorandum: Nushki-Duzdap Railway," from C. P. Skrine, Consul for Sistan and Kain, to the Government of India, February 24, 1928.

as the central government in Tehran collapsed and Lorestan plunged into chaos. World War One gave rise to other railway projects, however. Despite Iran's declaration of neutrality, Iran became a battlefield for both the Allies and the Central Powers because of its crucial strategic location on the way to India from Anatolia and Mesopotamia. To transport troops and war materials, both the Russians and the British planned railways from frontier cities to penetrate into the interior of Iran. For instance, on the eve of the 1917 Revolution, Imperial Russia was preparing to apply for railway concessions from ʿAshqabad to Mashhad and the Russo-Iranian border town of Astara on the western shore of the Caspian Sea to Tehran, in conjunction with concessions for mining rights.[85] Thus, at the beginning of 1917, Russian railway construction from the northern borders into Iran seemed inevitable to the British, who were prepared not to raise opposition so long as Russia promised a reciprocal attitude to British railway projects in southern Iran.[86]

Whereas Russian projects were abandoned after the 1917 Revolution, similar British projects in the south led to the construction of short railways that transported troops and war materials to the interior of Iran. In order to supply the newly-established South Persia Rifles, a British-trained military force that operated during World War One to counter the presence of the Central Powers in Iran, the British considered the

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85 IOR/L/PS/10/417, From Foreign Office to the Chairman, Kerman Mining Syndicate, January 13, 1917, and From Sir C. Marling to Political Department, February 19, 1917.
86 IOR/L/PS/10/417, "Memorandum by Lord Curzon," August 24, 1916, and From Viceroy to Political Department, February 22, 1917.

construction of the Bandar Abbas-Kerman Railway.[87] Yet, it ultimately constructed a much shorter forty-mile light railway from Bushehr to Borazjan in 1918, although the line was abandoned soon after the war.[88] Likewise, without notifying the Iranian government, the British extended a railway from Nushki in Indian Baluchistan to the hamlet of Dozdab (present-day Zahedan) on the Iranian side of Baluchistan to supply troops. The line continued to operate until 1931, contributing to the early development of Zahedan.

By the end of World War One in 1918, Iran still did not have an extensive railway system. The few railway lines in the frontiers were meant to increase the presence of Russia and Britain militarily and commercially, and they functioned as such. For instance, the emerging border town of Dozdab existed as the railway terminus, where merchandise from India was reloaded from freight trains to trucks, often operated by Indian drivers, and was distributed to eastern Iranian cities such as Mashhad, Birjand, Kerman, and even as far as Yazd. Consequently, by the mid-1920s, out of approximately five thousand residents in Dozdab, three thousand were estimated to be foreign subjects, mostly from India. In fact, Dozdab became an important commercial center for both Indian merchants and Punjabi Sikh revolutionaries and raised security concerns among

87 IOR/L/PS/10/417, From Major A. P. Trevor, Deputy Political Resident, Persian Gulf, to A. H. Grant, June 11, 1917.
88 IOR/L/MIL/17/15/6/2, "Military Reports on Persia, Vol. IV, Part II, Fars, Gulf Reports, Yazd and Laristan, 1922," 137.

British officers.[89] Thus, railways on the frontiers of Qajar dominion radically increased foreign presence not only militarily but also commercially. As will be discussed in Chapter Three, it was in response to the fear of frontiers being pulled away from the nation that Iranian modernists imagined a trans-Iranian railway to create a Tehran-centered national economy.

Phase 3: 1918-1927

By the end of World War One, due to the ongoing Revolution in Russia and the defeat of Germany, Britain became the sole dominant power in Iran. For Britain, Iran's importance increased for two main reasons: 1) the need to protect not only India but also Iraq; 2) the British naval reliance on oil. Thus, Lord Curzon, the British Foreign Secretary, aimed to create a stable, pro-British government in Iran by striking an agreement with Prime Minister Vosuq al-Dowleh, along with Sarem al-Dowleh and Firuz Mirza Nosrat al-Dowleh. The outcome of the secretive negotiations was the 1919 Anglo-Persian Agreement, which was supposed to increase British participation in Iran's financial, military, and other affairs of the state. The agreement also stipulated Anglo-Iranian cooperation to encourage the development of transportation infrastructure, including railways.[90]

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89 For instance, see FO248/1232, "East Persia Trade Report, 1919," 127, and FO416/113, "Annual Report, 1931," 47.

90 For the 1919 Anglo-Persian Agreement, see Homa Katouzian, *State and Society in Iran: The Eclipse of the Qajars and the Emergence of the Pahlavis* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2000), Chapter Four: The Campaign for the 1919 Agreement and

Simultaneously, the Persian Railway Syndicate attempted to continue negotiations for railway projects in southern Iran. Iran considered the 1913 option for the Mohammareh-Khorramabad Railway from the prewar period invalid because it had no approval from the Majles, which had been closed after Russia bombarded it in 1911.[91] As negotiations with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Firuz Mirza Nosrat al-Dowleh started after the announcement of the Anglo-Persian Agreement, the Khaneqin-Tehran Railway via Kermanshah and Hamadan became a higher priority.[92] Considering Britain's seemingly secure dominance in both Iran and Iraq, the line seemed to benefit Britain more than the Mohammareh-Khorramabad Railway that had to go through the still volatile province of Lorestan. Therefore, in January 1920, the Syndicate obtained the option for building the Khaneqin-Tehran Railway with branch lines from Qazvin to Anzali and from Hamadan to Mohammareh, and thus recognized the 1913 option that the Syndicate had obtained.[93]

Nevertheless, the option became null once again. The Anglo-Persian Agreement, which faced dissent from various British government authorities from the outset, invited international criticism, especially from revolutionary Russia, which denounced the

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Chapter Five: The Campaign against the 1919 Agreement, and Cyrus Ghani, *Iran and the Rise of Reza Shah: From Qajar Collapse to Pahlavi Rule* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1998), Chapter 1: The 1919 Agreement.

91 IOR/L/PS/10/793, From India Office to the Under Secretary of State, Foreign Office, April 9, 1919, and From the Persian Railways Syndicate to the Under Secretary of State, Foreign office, April 25, 1919.

92 IOR/L/PS/10/793, "Roads and Railways in Persia," from Foreign Office to India Office, December 31, 1919.

93 Luft, "The Persian Railway Syndicate," 195-6.

British Empire for enslaving Iran. Furthermore, domestic opposition within Iran pressured Vosuq al-Dowleh's cabinet. Shaykh Mohammad Khiyabani's revolt in Azarbaijan in particular cited the Anglo-Persian Agreement as one of the reasons for his uprising.[94] Moreover, the agreement had a constitutional problem, because Article 24 of the Iranian constitution stated that international agreements had to be signed by the Majles. In this mood of nationalist opposition against the first postwar manifestation of British imperialism, Vosuq al-Dowleh resigned and the Anglo-Persian Agreement was voided. Tainted by the rise of anti-British sentiment, the option was also abandoned, although the Syndicate continued to demand compensations from the Iranian government.

In the aftermath of the fiasco of the 1919 Anglo-Persian Agreement and its nullification, Britain needed to rethink its railway policy. Lord Reading, Viceroy of India at the time, acknowledged, "the time has passed when British capital and enterprise could hope to secure a privileged position in Persia, and to carry out schemes of railway development singlehandedly."[95] The Majles strongly opposed giving concessions to the British, including the Persian Railway Syndicate, and feared repeating the vicious cycle of British demands and Russian counter-demands that characterized the concession craze

94 Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions*, 153.

95 IOR/L/PS/10/794, "Persia: Proposal to Invite American Cooperation in Railway Enterprise," June 17, 1922.

of the late Naseri period.[96] Thus, by the beginning of 1922, the British sought American cooperation in railway construction.

By this time, the desirable route for the British had changed. Before World War One, various British government authorities advocated the Mohammareh-Khorramabad Railway in order to sabotage the German project of the Baghdad Railway. In the postwar period, especially by the mid-1920s, they preferred the East-West route, as exemplified by their preference for the Khaneqin-Tehran Railway. They objected to the route that would connect Tehran with the north, as the Soviet Union gradually consolidated power in the north, recovered commercially, and established connections with Indian revolutionaries such as the Ghadar Party.[97] As Percy Loraine, the Minister in Tehran, reiterated, objectives of a railway system in Iran included: 1) to create a direct rail link with India; 2) to counter the impact of the Trans-Siberian and the Trans-Caspian Railways; 3) to create a barrier against Russian penetration; 4) to enable Iran to fulfill its historical role as a link between East and West and keep it out of the Russian orbit; 5) to become a stabilizing factor in the region; 6) to encourage economic development.[98] According to Loraine, the route that would fulfill these objectives was an East-West route of Khaneqin – Kermanshah – Hamadan - Soltanabad (present-day Arak) – Isfahan –

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96 IOR/L/PS/10/794, "Attitudes of the Persian," from Percy Loraine to Foreign Office, February 22, 1923.

97 IOR/L/PS/10/794, "Persia: Proposal to Invite American Cooperation in Railway Enterprise," June 17, 1922. For the Ghadar Party, see Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

98 IOR/L/PS/10/794, from Loraine to Austen Chamberlain, May 9, 1925.

Yazd – Kerman - Dozdab, although a branch line from Hamadan to Tehran, along with other branch lines, would be acceptable "as long as it did not divert the main axis of the future trunk line."[99]

Unsurprisingly, Reza Khan, Iran's Prime Minister at the time, was dissatisfied that Loraine's preferred trunk line did not go through Tehran. He repeatedly expressed his preference for the Mohammareh-Tehran Railway via Khorramabad, Borujerd, and Soltanabad, with an extension to Bandar-e Gaz, followed by the line from Tehran to Tabriz via Qazvin.[100] Other lines in which he showed interest included the Tehran-Khaneqin Line, the Tehran-Dozdab Line via Isfahan, Yazd, and Kerman, and the Tehran-Mashhad Line.[101] Even more frustrating for the British was Reza Khan's inclination by the beginning of 1924 to offer the railway project to American companies although he allowed British participation "provided that the company was American in name" given the anti-British atmosphere within Iran.[102] Believing that the British generously brought Americans into the Iranian railway scheme and that the 1920 option that the Syndicate obtained should be valid, Loraine complained that Americans were "now to snatch Mohammerah-Khoremabad-Tehran line under our noses for themselves."[103] Despite the protest of the British Legation for a railway concession given to any group other than the

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99 IOR/L/PS/10/794, "Persian Railway Development," from D. G. Osborne, Foreign Office, to the Persian Railways Syndicate, October 11, 1923.

100 IOR/L/PS/10/794, "Railway Construction in Persia," from Foreign office to Charles Greenway, January 7, 1924.

101 Ibid., and IOR/L/PS/11/209, From Percy Loraine to Lord Curzon, January 5, 1924.

102 Ibid.

103 IOR/L/PS/11/209, "American Commercial Activity in Persia," from Loraine to H. M. Charge d'Affaires in Washington, February 6, 1924.

Persian Railway Syndicate, the German-American consortium signed the contract to build the Trans-Iranian Railway, forcing the British to modify their policy once again to find a way of some form of Anglo-American cooperation in the construction.[104]

From Frontiers to Interiors

Various imperial railway projects from the three phases examined above illustrate that imperial railway projects aimed to carve up imperial spheres out of Qajar dominion. Imperial railway projects did not hinge upon the notion that the railways had to go through Tehran, the Qajar capital of Iran. Iran was not even a destination on its own. Rather, it was on the way to the destination (India), and thus needed to be maintained and divided as such. As illustrated by such plans as the Jolfa-Tabriz railway, the Quetta-Sistan railway, and the Baghdad-Karachi railway, the goal of imperial railway projects was to advance imperial strategic or commercial interests from outside of Qajar dominion into Iran's frontiers. By planning the extension of a railway from ʿAshqabad to Mashhad, the center of eastern Iran, Russia in the 1910s attempted to solidify the status of Khorasan and eastern Iran as a market for Russian products. Likewise, Germany valued the Khaneqin-Tehran branch line to the Baghdad Railway because it would penetrate German goods into interior Iran from outside. Thus, imperial projects shared the assumption that railways would expand the reach of their goods into the interior market of Iran like tentacles. Individuals such as Yate even believed that railways would bring

104 IOR/L/PS/10/794, From the Persian Railways Syndicate to the Under Secretary of State, Foreign Office, January 23, 1924, and From Laurence Oliphant to the Under Secretary of State, January 11, 1926.

"civilization" in general to Iran. These grandiose expectations also caused fear when rival empires and their entrepreneurs proposed railway projects, leading to frequent oppositions and the absence of a major railway system in Qajar Iran.

This situation was similar to that found in Siam, which was a buffer state between the British and French Empires in Southeast Asia. While the British planned railways to reach Yunnan in China through Burma and northwestern Siam, the French attempted to reach Yunnan through Saigon and eastern Siam, threatening the Siamese vision of a Bangkok-centered economy.[105] Thus, as was the case with the Siamese state railway project, the Iranian state railway project emerged among the Qajar political elite in the context of competing imperial railway projects that did not heed Iran's territorial integrity and independence. The next chapter will discuss how Iranians, mainly the Qajar political elite, imagined a railway project in Iran as a way to create a national economy when British, Russian, German, and other foreign railway planners were trying to carve up their imperial strategic and commercial spheres out of Qajar dominion.

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105 See Ichiro Kakizaki, *Tai Keizai to Tetsudo, 1885-1935 Nen* (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Hyoronsha, 2000), 105-112. The first state railway in Siam was completed in 1900, much later than its neighbors.

Chapter 3: Imagining a Trans-Iranian Railway

Introduction

In 1860, a young cleric Mohammad Ali left the central Iranian village of Mahallat and began an eighteen-year journey that would take him to lands both near and far, including the Hejaz, Russia, Europe, India, China, Japan, and the United States, where he became the first Iranian to be a naturalized citizen of the country. He later acquired the epithet Hajj Sayyah (traveler) and wrote a memoir of his travel. The memoir makes it clear that at least in Europe, he spent a significant amount of time on trains (*kaleskeh-ye rah ahan*). In Pest, Vienna, Milan, Paris, and other European cities, he took advantage of the rapidly expanding railway networks to move speedily from one city to another, crossing iron bridges and long tunnels that penetrated through prosperously cultivated lands of Europe, the details of which he recorded numerous times.[106]

During one of the railway journeys, Hajj Sayyah had an encounter with a French peasant, whose knowledge of the world impressed him. The peasant asked, "Is our railway better or yours?" Hajj Sayyah responded, "In our land, there is not a railway yet." The peasant seemed perplexed and asked, "Why?" Not knowing how to respond, the

106 Mohammad Ali Sayyah, *Safarnameh-ye Hajj Sayyah beh Farang*. ed., Ali Dehbashi (Tehran: Entesharat-e Shehab-e Saqeb va Entesharat-e Sokhan, 1999), 89, 93, 96, 101, 112, and 120.

Iranian traveler simply said, "I don't know," and changed the subject. The experience embarrassed him to the extent that he sat quietly for the remainder of the journey.[107]

Hajj Sayyah's experience exemplifies Iranian travelers' early encounters with railway technology outside of Qajar dominion by the 1860s.[108] Facilitated by the nineteenth-century transport revolution, travelers from Iran like Hajj Sayyah started to experience railway journeys abroad more frequently in the second half of the nineteenth century. Their descriptions of railway journeys in travelogues sometimes included basic information on railway travel such as how to get on the train, where to get food during the journey, and how it felt to travel by rail, in order to introduce the new technology to Iranian readers and serve as a guide for future travelers.[109] Importantly, as noted in Chapter Two, the railway boom hit much of Europe and the colonized parts of Asia and the Middle East almost simultaneously, allowing Iranian travelers to witness railways not only in Europe but also in Iran's surrounding regions such as India, Egypt, the Ottoman Empire, and a few decades later, in the Caucasus.

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107 Ibid., 147.

108 Although Hajj Sayyah was one of the most renowned Iranian travelers of the nineteenth century, he was certainly not the first Iranian to witness railways abroad. For instance, Farrokh Khan Amin al-Dowleh was also sent to Europe in an official mission in the 1850s and wrote about railways along with other infrastructural developments. See M. R. Ghanoonparvar, *In a Persian Mirror: Images of the West and Westerners in Iranian Fiction* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), 22-5.

109 Another example of an Iranian traveler who experienced railway journeys in the early 1860s was Seyf al-Dowleh. He recorded the details of how to travel by rail based on his experience with the Egyptian Railway between Alexandria and Cairo in 1862. The railway opened to traffic in 1858. See Seyf al-Dowleh Soltan Mohammad, *Safarnameh-ye Seyf al-Dowleh* (Tehran: Nashrani, 1985), 109-115.

This chapter examines Iranians' initial encounters with railway technology from the mid-nineteenth century to the ratification of the Railway Act in 1927, which paved the way for the construction of the Trans-Iranian Railway. By tracing the developments of various imaginations of railways among the Iranian political elite, it explains their attempts at translating railway technology that they witnessed outside of Iran as a possibility in the specific context of Iran. In doing so, it stresses contingent factors in the evolution of Iranians' understandings of an Iranian railway project. Although official publications often present the Trans-Iranian Railway as the embodiment of the unchanging "longtime dream of Iranian patriots" of over seventy years,[110] Iranian imaginations of an Iranian railway project shifted considerably in a number of ways. Who should undertake the project? Who should fund it? What should its route be like? What is its relationship with animal-powered transport? What should its ultimate outcomes comprise? Answers to these questions differed among the Iranian political elite at any given time, but more importantly, the shared assumptions of the time changed significantly between the 1860s and 1927.

In discussing the shifts, this chapter stresses Iran's global connections, particularly Iran's surrounding world. While scholars often emphasize Iran's encounters with the "West" to explain Iranians' technological aspirations, these aspirations evolved in the context of encounters between Iran and its surrounding world, which forced modernists to situate Iran in the global technological order. Thus, similar to the cases of other ideas and institutions of foreign origins, Iranians saw various possibilities for Iran

110 "Rah Ahan-e Iran," *Iran-e Emruz*, March 15, 1939, 48-9.

in a broader global context.[111] Furthermore, as more members of the Qajar political elite began to record the details of their journeys in travelogues (*safarnameh*), which became increasingly more institutionalized during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah, not only travelers but also readers of travelogues deepened their understandings of railway technology on a global level.[112] Iranian modernists' imagination of a trans-Iranian railway as a state initiative to create a national economy evolved in connection with these factors since the Naseri period.

Naseri-Period Travelogues and Encounters with Railways

As discussed in Chapter Two, in the 1860s, a small circle of Iranian modernists with experience abroad started to encourage foreign investment, particularly British, in railway projects within Qajar dominion. A leading figure in this circle was Mirza Hoseyn Khan Moshir al-Dowleh, who had prior diplomatic experience in India, the Caucasus, and the Ottoman Empire before becoming the premier and working to grant a comprehensive concession to Baron Julius de Reuter. The failure of the 1872 Reuter Concession did not

111 Historians have discussed different aspects of Iran's connections with its surrounding world and beyond at the turn of the twentieth century. For constitutionalism and the connections with the Caucasus, see Janet Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy, and the Origins of Feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), Chapter 2. For education and the connections with the Ottoman Empire, see Monica Ringer, *Education, Religion, and the Discourse of Cultural Reform in Qajar Iran* (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, 2001), Chapter 5.

112 For the institutionalization of travel writing and the circulation of travelogues, see Naghmeh Sohrabi, *Taken for Wonder: Nineteenth-Century Travel Accounts from Iran to Europe* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

deter him from promoting railway construction. In 1875, for instance, the official gazette *Iran*, which heavily reflected his opinions, ran a series of articles by Baron de Norman, whom Mirza Hoseyn Khan invited to Iran to establish the first European-language newspaper. The articles discussed how railways transformed industry, agriculture, trade, mining, and forestry elsewhere and advocated a similar railway project in Iran.[113]

Already aware of the practice of royal journeys to Europe in the Ottoman and Japanese Empires, Mirza Hoseyn Khan also encouraged Naser al-Din Shah's 1873 travel to Europe, hoping that the Shah and his retinue would witness various manifestations of progress in Europe, including its extensive railway systems.[114] In addition, Naser al-Din Shah hoped to foster stronger relations with European countries, particularly with Britain, probably because presenting an image of normalcy and stability in diplomatic relations could buttress the stability of his rule since the Second Anglo-Persian War of 1856-1857.[115] Naser al-Din Shah extensively recorded his journey to Europe in 1873, just as he did during his previous trips to such places as Gilan, Khorasan, and the ʿAtabat. His 1873 travelogue introduced to the reader back in Iran what railway journeys would be like and how railways transformed wherever they passed.

After traveling on horseback in Iran, crossing the Caspian Sea from Anzali to Astrakhan, and sailing down the Volga River, his first encounter with the railway took place in Tsaritsin (present-day Volgograd). He described his first railway journey in

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113 Guity Nashat, *The Origins of Modern Reform in Iran, 1870-80*, 132-3.

114 Fereydun Adamiyat, *Andisheh-ye Taraqqi va Hokumat-e Qanun: ʿAsr-e Sepahsalar* (Tehran: Sherkat-e Sahami-ye Entesharat-e Khwarazmi, 1973), 259-60.

115 Sohrabi, *Taken for Wonder*, 87-8.

detail, starting with the spaciousness and luxuriousness of the royal carriage. Once the train departed the station, he immediately noticed the prosperity of agricultural lands along the railway route: "whichever way we looked out over the land, we saw green fields, meadows, flowers, grass, tented tribes, mares, sheep, swine, &c. [*sic*], and every two or three leagues a handsome, populous village."[116] In his mind, the prosperity owed much to the presence of the railway stations that existed about every few leagues and connected the villages to their hinterlands through horse carriages, which stood in front of each station to transport passengers and merchandize.[117] Thus, in Naser al-Din Shah's mind, animal-powered transport was an integral part of the transport system that contributed greatly to connecting distant lands rather than a symbol of backwardness, as Iranian modernists of the early twentieth century would perceive. This understanding was hardly surprising, because throughout his journey from Iran to Europe and then back to Iran, the shah continued to use the horse carriage for short-distance travel, as it connected not only railway stations in villages with their hinterlands but also stations to various urban neighborhoods. In other words, the existence of animal-powered transport did not necessarily differentiate Iran from elsewhere. In 1873, animal-powered transport, in particular the horse carriage, supplemented railways in Europe. Therefore, the sense of shame associated with animal-powered transport that would become more evident by the turn of the twentieth century had not emerged at this point.

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116 Naser al-Din Shah, *The Diary of H. M. The Shah of Persia During His Tour Through Europe in A. D. 1873*, trans. J. W. Redhouse (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, 1995), 33.
117 Ibid.

In addition to the impact of railways on European agriculture and general economic conditions, Naser al-Din Shah described various aspects of his experience on the train, including train facilities and the discomfort of darkness, smoke, and noise in tunnels. Among these aspects of the railway journey, the shah was particularly interested in its speed. For instance, in his trip from Tsaritsin to Moscow, he noted that the train traveled five leagues per hour and described the scenery outside the window: "The pace of the train was such that we overtook the flying crows, passed them, and left them behind."[118] While he was fascinated by the rapidity of the railway journey that enabled him to visit distant places in a short period of time, he also expressed dissatisfaction with the problems that high speed caused. In Germany, he complained that he did not even have time to fall asleep because the train carried him from one city to another too quickly, forcing him to get prepared to descend and greet local officials.[119] Likewise, in England, the rapidity of the train made it "impossible for one to distinguish any place," and even worse, almost caused a catastrophe when the spark on the wheels lit fire on a train car.[120] Despite the potential discomfort and danger of the speed, he traveled by train for intercity movements, especially in Europe, including the train rides from Russia to Germany, from Germany to Belgium, from France to Italy, in England, and in the Caucasus, before returning to Iran. The extensive use of railways in the shah's journey

118 Ibid., 33-4.
119 Ibid., 95.
120 Ibid., 141.

was indicative of how the nineteenth-century transport revolution impacted the way in which travelers moved a long distance in a relatively short period of time.

In 1886, a little over a decade after Naser al-Din Shah's travel, another traveler left Iran. His name was Hajji Mohammad Ali Pirzadeh, a dervish who had enjoyed the patronage of Mirza Hoseyn Khan Moshir al-Dowleh.[121] Possibly because of his previous experience of traveling across Europe in 1860, about which we have no record, he was requested to accompany Moʿayyed al-Molk, a prominent official in the Province of Fars in need of medical treatment. His three-year journey took him to Muscat, India, and Egypt before entering Europe across the Mediterranean. Thus, after traveling in Iran on caravan trade routes, his first encounter with railways in this journey happened in India, first in Karachi, and then in Bombay.

The dervish was deeply impressed with the new quarters of the growing port city of Karachi. While the old city of Karachi looked similar to Iranian cities with "narrow alleys, lowly buildings, and dirty shops," the new quarters built by the British boasted impressive "stone buildings like European buildings,"[122] including the railway station. Hajji Pirzadeh attributed Karachi's prosperity to its role as the transportation hub of the Indian subcontinent. The port connected Karachi to London, Paris, Egypt, Iran, and all over India. Moreover, the extensive railway network connected the city to all parts of India, in particular Peshawar and Sind. Therefore, Karachi enabled him to envision Iran's

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121 Hafez F. Farmayan ed. *Safarnameh-ye Hajji Pirzadeh, Jeld-e Avval* (Tehran: Chapkhaneh-ye Daneshgah-e Tehran, 1963), 2-3.
122 Ibid., 118.

future with a railway that would connect Iran with the global economy, juxtaposed with the old quarters that had not yet benefited from the railway system just like Iran.

After leaving Karachi, he witnessed railways again in Bombay. Impressed by the extensive railway network, he noted, "in Bombay and the rest of Indian provinces, there is no high price, famine, or poverty among local populations because railways always carry goods and grain, and people of India, both men and women, are busy with work. From ten-year-old boys and girls to seventy-year old men and women, nobody is idle."[123] In short, "they (railways) have become the reason for the flourishing of India."[124]

Like Naser al-Din Shah, Hajji Pirzadeh was also impressed by how new modes of transportation such as steamships and railways were supplemented by animal-powered transport. He noted the presence of "big, plump, and handsome" cows that "would not be seen in Iran, as well as other animals such as camels, mules, and donkeys.[125] Just like the hardworking people of India, these healthy animals transported both goods and people from the port and railway station to various quarters within the city and to the hinterlands of the city. Thus, in his mind, animal-powered transport did not embody the shameful backwardness of Iran. Rather, it was an integral part of the transportation network that symbolized the prosperity of India.

After leaving India, he traveled by train numerous times, including in Egypt from Suez to Cairo, and then from Cairo to Alexandria, and in England. Yet, as he got

123 Ibid., 126.
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid., 119.

accustomed to them, descriptions of railways became brief and perfunctory. He still described such matters as Egypt's rich agricultural lands as the train came closer to Cairo and the new subway in London, but neither of them made him compare the sorry situation of Iran with Egypt in the way his experiences with the Indian railway system had done earlier in the journey.

Europe was the final destination for both Naser al-Din Shah and Hajji Pirzadeh, however accidental the choice of the destination was for the latter. Both travelers were mesmerized by the transport system in Europe, which had the highest speed trains, long tunnels that took half an hour to go through, and new subways, at a time when nowhere else in the world had such things. Yet, focusing exclusively on Europe as the source of knowledge about new modes of transport among Iranian travelers to Europe is problematic because it ignores the lands that lie between the starting point of their journey and Europe. Iranian travelers relied on various kinds of animal-powered transport such as camels, horses, and horse carriages in Iran. When they departed the Qajar domain, they were not in Europe yet. In the continuous landscape that connected Iran and Europe, they passed through the Caucasus, Russia, or India, depending on their route, where they had the first encounter with the railway.

While Naser al-Din Shah first traveled by the railway in southern Russia, Hajji Pirzadeh witnessed the railway in India before reaching Europe. Particularly in the case of Hajji Pirzadeh, India gave a convenient comparative case with Iran because of its geographical proximity as well as its comparable economic condition prior to railway construction, as exemplified by the existence of the old city quarters that resembled

Iranian cities. Thus, more than railway systems in Europe, Indian railways allowed him to imagine an optimistic future for Iran. In this context, it is indicative that the only place in Naser al-Din Shah's travelogue where he mentioned the construction of a railway was in Poti, Georgia, when he was on the way back to Tehran. While all descriptions of railways in Europe focused on the experience of being on a train, in Georgia, he discussed the difficulties in constructing a railway from Poti to Tiflis due to the region's heavy forest, marsh, and inundation.[126] The different focus might be attributable to the apparent comparability of the situation of Georgia with that of Iran due to Georgia's geographical proximity to Iran and its history of Iranian rule until it was ceded to Russia in the Treaty of Golestan in 1813. Railway construction may have appeared to be a possible future for Iran if it was happening in the former Qajar domain of Georgia.

It is also crucial to consider the fact that the vast majority of Iranian travelers who set foot on foreign land never visited Europe. In the list of 283 Qajar-period travelogues compiled by Morikawa, the two most popular destinations outside of Qajar dominion were Mecca and the ʿAtabat, with over forty travelogues each. Europe and India comprised the next most common destinations, with over twenty travelogues each. Other major destinations included Egypt, Istanbul and Anatolia, the Caucasus, Russia, and Central Asia, with between five and ten travelogues each.[127] Since Iranian travelers to

126 Naser al-Din Shah, *The Diary of H. M. The Shah of Persia*, 405.

127 Tomoko Morikawa, "Gajaru-choki Ryokoki Shiryo Kenkyu Josetsu," *Seinan Ajia Kenkyu* (2001): 44-68.

Europe traveled through such places as the Caucasus and Russia before reaching Europe, European railways were rarely the first railways Iranian travelers witnessed.

Mirza Mohammad Hoseyn Farahani was one of such travelers whose journey did not take him to Europe. Being a diplomat in the Naseri period, he had served in India and performed pilgrimage to holy cities such as Mashhad, the ʿAtabat, and Mecca multiple times in the course of his life. In the existent travelogue of his pilgrimage to Mecca that started in 1885, he took advantage of the rapidly developing railway networks of the Caucasus and took the route from Tehran to Baku, Batumi, Istanbul, Alexandria, Suez, and Jeddah before entering Mecca. He traveled from Tehran to the Caspian port of Anzali via Qazvin and Rasht by a horse-drawn carriage, the most comfortable mode of land transport at the time. From Anzali, he crossed the Caspian Sea by steamship to Baku, where he experienced a seventeen-hour railway journey to the Black Sea port of Batumi, which Russia seized from the Ottoman Empire in 1878.[128] Since the Russian-built railway had only opened two years earlier, Farahani explained to the reader logistical issues such as where to buy tickets, what kinds of luggage required an extra fee, and how to maintain ritual purity during a railway journey among non-Muslims.[129]

Before reaching Mecca, he traveled by train again from Alexandria to Suez in Khedival Egypt, which had been under British occupation since 1882. Farahani's comments with regard to the two railway systems shed light on his view about the

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128 Hafez Farmayan and Elton L. Daniel eds., *A Shi'ite Pilgrimage to Mecca, 1885-1886: The Safarnameh of Mirza Mohammad Hosayn Farahani* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 67.
129 Ibid., 67-72.

adequate role of the state in maximizing the economic impact of railways. In Batumi, in addition to the Russian military uses of the railway, he noted the rapid growth of the port city of Batumi since the opening of the railway, which, in his opinion, stood in stark contrast with the decline of Poti, another Black Sea port city located about seventy kilometers north of Batumi. Poti had served as a land and sea transportation center before the railway to Batumi opened, but its position was being taken over by Batumi since the opening of the railway. He attributed the growth of Batumi to Russian policy, which included the construction of orderly bazaars and streets near the railway station. More importantly, the Russian government issued a decree not to impose customs duties on imported items that would enter from Batumi.[130] Thanks to these measures, he believed, Russia maximized the benefits of the new railway in Batumi.

In contrast, Farahani found the Egyptian Railway less than satisfactory. Although he did not understate the economic impact of the railway on Egyptian cities, he complained at length about how the Egyptian government operated and maintained the railway. His complaints included the uncleanliness of station buildings, the lack of amenities, the unavailability of food and drink, and unpunctuality, sometimes in direct comparison with the Russian Railway in the Caucasus.[131] He explicitly attributed the poor condition of the Egyptian Railway to the political condition of Egypt, "For those twenty-five years that it (the railway) was with the (French) company, all was in perfect order. Then the company's term expired, and now the railway has been given over to the

130 Ibid., 92.
131 Ibid., 168.

Khedive of Egypt. He gives the profits to the English because of the debt."[132] Thus, Farahani considered that the Egyptian bankruptcy and the British occupation made it impossible for the Egyptian state to use profits for the proper maintenance and operation of the railway, causing its rapid deterioration. To Farahani, the active involvement of the state, along with the danger of a foreign occupation, seemed essential in maximizing the benefits of a railway in an economy.

These travelogues comprised a small sample of the many travelogues from the Naseri period. Yet, the descriptions of railways contained in them indicate that travels to foreign lands and subsequent travelogues written and circulated during the Naseri period provided knowledge about technological innovations that originated in Europe. Although existing scholarship often emphasizes Europe as the geographical location of Iranians' encounters with technology,[133] Iranians more frequently encountered railways in Iran's neighboring world than they did in Europe. In fact, railways in such places as Karachi, the Caucasus, and Egypt gave travelers more practical models that seemed applicable to Iran's situation, and thus travelers went beyond being mesmerized and provided more detailed descriptions on such issues as the economic impact, the molding of productive citizens, and the role of the state. Thus, because Iran was a latecomer to the age of

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132 Ibid., 169.

133 Notably, historians such as Nile Green situates technology in a global encounter. For instance, he discusses the conceptions of time and space by examining the travels of Indian and Iranian intellectuals not only to Europe but also to the Middle East and their dissemination of ideas through print. Nile Green, "Spacetime and the Muslim Journey West: Industrial Communications in the Making of the 'Muslim World,'" *American Historical Review* (2013): 401-429.

railways when its surrounding world experienced the nineteenth-century transport revolution, Iranian travelers had multiple points of reference to acquire knowledge about railways. This was similar to the case of Siam, where travelers and rulers encountered railways not only in Europe but also in nearby European colonies such as Java and India.[134] Along with the contemporary treatises discussed in the next section, travelogues discussed here contributed to the evolution of the Qajar political elite's idea about what an Iranian railway project should look like.

Imagining an Iranian Railway Project

While knowledge about railways was being accumulated through descriptions in travelogues in the second half of the nineteenth century, some Iranian diplomats proposed railway construction in Iran within two decades of the Reuter Concession. Diplomats were especially well-positioned to write such proposals because of their extensive experience of living abroad and the connections they often had with influential figures in political, commercial, and religious circles of Iranians both inside and outside Iran.

One of the diplomats was Mirza Yusef Khan Mostashar al-Dowleh, who had served in Tiflis and Paris, and later in his life, played a pivotal role in the development of new roads such as the Qazvin-Tabriz road by forming a liaison with Tabrizi and Isfahani merchants, mojtaheds, and prominent officials.[135] He was also connected to influential individuals in and outside Iran, including the reformist premier Mirza Hoseyn Khan

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134 Kakizaki, *Tai Keizai to Tetsudo*, 106-7.

135 Adamiyyat, *Andisheh-ye Taraqqi*, 323.

Moshir al-Dowleh and the anti-clerical intellectual in the Caucasus, Mirza Fath ʿAli Akhundzadeh. While not excluding the possibility of foreign capital altogether, Mostashar al-Dowleh proposed two ideas for railway construction, preferably by domestic capital, in 1874 and 1879 respectively, and presented them to Naser al-Din Shah. His 1874 proposal was entitled the "Naseri Project of the Qom Railway (*porozheh-ye naseri-ye rah ahan-e qom*)," and as the name indicated, it was a plan to build a railway from Tehran to Qom via Shah ʿAbd al-ʿAzim.[136] Thus, the proposal intended to connect two major shrine cities that were popular pilgrimage destinations for the population in Tehran. In fact, the cited benefits of building a railway included facilitating pilgrimage, along with improving life through the development of industry, fishery, and agriculture and the eradication of famine. The last benefit became particularly important in the wake of the 1870 famine that devastated the Iranian population due to the lack of an adequate transportation infrastructure in Qajar dominion.[137] To provide an estimate of profits, Mostashar al-Dowleh took into consideration the number of pilgrims, the money they would spend depending on their economic status, agricultural products transported from around Qom to Tehran, and various items carried to Tehran, northwest Iran, and Istanbul from areas south of Qom, including India.[138]

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136 Ibid., 327.

137 For instance, the population of Qom decline from 25,382 in 1867/68 to 14,000 in 1874/75. Shoko Okazaki, "The Great Persian Famine of 1870-71," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London 49: 1, In Honour of Ann K. S. Lambton* (1986): 184.

138 Adamiyat, *Andisheh-ye Taraqqi*, 327, footnote 42.

The opposition of the ulama to the Reuter Concession pushed forward by his ally Mirza Hoseyn Khan may have made Mostashar al-Dowleh more cautious. To secure support from the ulama, he attached to his proposal a fatwa of Hajji Molla Sadeq, a prominent mojtahed in Qom. The fatwa proclaimed, "railways result in the cultivation of dreadful ruins and uncultivated lands as well as the reduction of the price of not only grains and fruits but also most food and consumption items. They also remedy idleness and help the unemployed and profligate to find use"[139] Thus, "if God's will and His favor include the conditions of the Iranian people, a railway will connect the land to the sea, and there will be a prosperous kingdom, and the brokenness and misery of people will be remedied, and everybody will be working."[140]

Though the Naseri Project of the Qom Railway did not materialize, during his sojourn in Mashhad, Mostashar al-Dowleh proposed another railway, which remained unimplemented. The plan was to build a railway from Tehran to Mashhad, in addition to a branch line from Shahrud to Bandar-e Gaz to connect the line to the Caspian Sea. Like his previous proposal, Mostashar al-Dowleh secured support from prominent local figures, including merchants, Qajar notables, and six mojtaheds in Mashhad, who cited the rapid development of Alexandria thanks to the Egyptian railway system. Also like his previous proposal, he justified his plan by stressing the economic benefits of the line. First, he believed that the railway would generate sufficient profits to construct another line from Tehran to Khaneqin due to the presence of Imam Reza Shrine in Mashhad, the

139 Ibid., 328.
140 Ibid.

most popular pilgrimage site in the Qajar domain. Second, he argued that the increase of trade, agriculture, and industry would allow Iranians to accumulate capital and diminish the need to rely on foreign capital and expertise. Furthermore, considering the remoteness of Khorasan, he stressed the political benefit of strengthening the presence of the central government.[141]

The other proposal was circulated among statesmen and intellectuals by Mohammad Mirza Kashef al-Saltaneh, who was a young diplomat working as the vice minister of the Iranian Embassy in Paris at the time of authoring the treatise on the benefits of railways in 1889. After living in Paris for eight years, he later served in Russia and India and actively participated in the Constitutional Revolution.[142] Kashef al-Saltaneh strongly believed in the benefits of railways, particularly their economic benefits to the public. Railways would foster industry and agriculture and create jobs. They would also facilitate the internal distribution of food, which would prevent disasters like the 1870-71 famine.[143] More fundamentally, compared to Mostashar al-Dowleh, he stressed the importance of international trade in economic development, as the case of France demonstrated, where the total trade volume increased by eight times between 1840 and 1870.[144]

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141 Ibid, 328-9.

142 For his biography, see Mohammad Kashef, *Taghyirat va Taraqqiyat dar Vaz' va Harakat va Mosaferat va Haml-e Ashya va Favayed-e Rah Ahan*, ed. Mohammad Javad Sahebi (Tehran: Nashr-e Noqteh, 1994), 3-7.

143 Ibid., 73.

144 Ibid., 37-8.

To maximize the economic benefits of railways, Kashef al-Saltaneh believed that the state needed to get involved in the railway sector. He cited numerous examples of European governments, including Belgian, Dutch, and German, building new railways and purchasing existing railways from private companies and argued, "in no European country, companies own railway tracks but only the right to use the state-owned tracks for the period of ninety nine years," with the notable exception of England, where private companies paid five percent of their ticket sales to the government.[145]

The cases that particularly interested him with regard to state involvement were Russian and Brazilian railways because of the prominent role of the state to construct and operate railways in vast, sparsely-populated territories, which made them more comparable to Iran's case than such other cases as Germany and France. In both cases, in order to protect the interests of the public, the state subsidized the railway sector at least initially until freight and passenger traffic started to increase and the railways started to generate enough revenues for the state. Thus, citing a French engineer/politician, Kashef al-Saltaneh proclaimed, "([e]ven if railway companies do not generate profits at all and the government needs to shoulder the entire expenses, it should try to increase railways."[146]

His deep knowledge of various European railways did not make him a Europhile in the manner similar to Mirza Hoseyn Khan, who favorably viewed the Reuter Concession. What infuriated the young diplomat was the domination of the West

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145 Ibid., 96-7.
146 Ibid., 100.

(*maghreb zamin*) over the Islamic East (*mashreq-e eslami*) and the inattention of Iranian authorities to tackling this threat. He deplored that, "the Iranian governmental authorities do not pay attention to acquiring what brings national progress (*taraqqiyat-e mellat*), and because of their ignorance and inattention, neighbors have exploited the opportunity and invaded from all directions. They will gradually gain control of our country (*mamalek*)."[147] His criticism went beyond Iran. Reflecting the prevalence of various identities that transcended the nation in the last decades of the nineteenth century, he lamented, "Oh people of Asia and Africa. Oh brothers of the Islamic land! How long are you going to sink yourselves in the sleep of ignorance?.....What makes you finally feel that your homeland, language, customs, and religious traditions are disgraced?"[148]

According to Kashef al-Saltaneh, the fundamental reason behind Europe's rapid progress was not education, because European powers did not dominate the East until the nineteenth century despite the existence of education in Europe prior to that.[149] It was not due to the inherent superiority of Europeans or the richness of Europe's soil, either, because people of Asia, especially Iranians, were more apt and hardworking, and the soil of the East was more productive than anywhere else.[150] Nor was it because of the wealth of natural resources, as proven by the poverty of Iran despite its rich natural resources.[151] The root cause of "the progress, wealth, and power of European nations (*taraqqi va*

147 Ibid., 7.
148 Ibid., 107.
149 Ibid., 25.
150 Ibid., 74.
151 Ibid., 80.

servat va qodrat-e mellal-e farangestan)" was the invention of steamboats and railways because these innovations revolutionized movement.[152]

At this juncture, Kashef al-Saltaneh employed a physiological understanding of the human body and drew an analogy to the national community to make a case for the utmost importance of movement for a nation. He divided movement into internal and external, without which all living beings, both plants and animals, would be considered dead. Just like a human body, an animal, or a plant, a society needed both internal and external movements, and its necessity increased as the population increased. Therefore, just like blood circulated through arteries and veins of the human body, a nation needed to transport agricultural and industrial products within its territory on roads, canals, and rivers and communicate via the telegraph. Yet, having only internal movements was insufficient. Nations needed external movements, too, which were political and commercial connections and relations between nations. Without such internal and external movements, a nation would be a "soulless nation (*mellat-e bi ruh*)."[153] Because the invention of railways transformed this fundamental component in the life of a nation, they enabled Europe to surpass the power of the East, which had not experienced a revolution in movement, in a short period of time. Therefore, in order to tilt the power balance back toward Iran and the East in general, railway construction was crucial.

Kashef al-Saltaneh predicted that Iran would face major challenges in railway construction due to its lack of local capital and unity among its people (*ettehad-e*

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152 Ibid., 25-6.
153 Ibid., 29-31.

qowmiyat),[154] as exemplified by the failure of previous plans such as the Reuter Concession and Mostashar al-Dowleh's proposals. Nevertheless, he advocated only a specific method of raising funds for railway construction. First, he opposed giving concessions to a British or French company because they would eventually interfere with Iranian affairs by using their government's influence and would fill important positions with their compatriots. Instead of giving concession to a European company, he proposed that the concession should be given to a patriotic Iranian, especially since any concession-holder would have to establish a company with investors or receive loans to execute a costly railway project anyway.[155] Second, while he did not oppose receiving loans in principle, he opposed receiving loans from Europeans because they did not share any sense of unity with Iranians. Instead, he proposed that Iran should receive loans from "fellow Easterners (*hamkishan-e mashreqi*) such as the Ottomans, Indians, and the Chinese."[156] In his view, borrowing from other Easterners would strengthen the solidarity among Eastern governments and allow them to regain power over the West.

With the goal of strengthening Iran and Iran's unity with Muslims of the "East," particularly the Ottoman Empire, India, and Afghanistan, Kashef al-Saltaneh proposed some potential routes for a future railway project. He argued that Iran should prioritize an international line, because only by tapping into its geographical advantage of lying between the "West" and the "East," Iran could become a major player in international

154 Ibid., 104.
155 Ibid., 109-110.
156 Ibid., 110-111.

trade.[157] Thus, his proposals ironically echoed some British and Russian proposals that aimed to connect European and Indian railway systems by viewing Iran largely as a passing point. Specifically, he proposed several lines including: 1) Istanbul-Ankara-Trabzon-Tabriz-Tehran-Bandar Abbas-Karachi; 2) the Caucasus-Tabriz; 3) Alexandretta-Baghdad-Shushtar, a trunk line that would penetrate central Iran such as Isfahan; 4) Tehran-Mashhad-Merv-Mongolia-Beijing; 5) Mashhad-Kabul-north India. While most of these lines completely ignored the international politics of railway construction, Kashef al-Saltaneh also advocated a railway within Iran. Contrary to arguments for a railway from Rasht to the port of Bushehr, a significant transportation center connecting Iran and the Persian Gulf at the time, he proposed a line to connect Amol on the Caspian Sea coast with Shushtar on the Persian Gulf coast due to its relative shortness and less challenging geographical features for construction.[158]

The proposals submitted by Mostashar al-Dowleh and Kashef al-Saltaneh in the two decades after the Reuter Concession exemplified shifting trends in the Iranian discourse of railway construction. Rather than attempting to attract European investment with railway construction in Iran as the circle of Mirza Hoseyn Khan Moshir al-Dowleh did in the 1870s, Mostashar al-Dowleh presumed that private investors would provide funds for the construction of the railway with minimal involvement of the Iranian state. He even consulted with Iranian merchants in commercial centers such as Tabriz, Isfahan, Bushehr, Istanbul, and Bombay, who also expressed interest in such projects to increase

157 Ibid., 113-4.
158 Ibid., 43.

their commercial opportunities.[159] His assumption was partly based on the understanding that the Qajar state would be financially incapable of completing a railway. Incidentally, in 1887, approximately the same time as the writings of Mostashar al-Dowleh and Kashef al-Saltaneh, the prominent merchant Hajj Mohammad Hasan Amin al-Zarb launched the railway project in the Caspian Sea province of Mazandaran, with the possibility of an extension to Tehran, using his own capital.[160] Although Amin al-Zarb's Amol-Mahmudabad Railway ultimately failed, the case of Amin al-Zarb, along with the proposals presented by Mostashar al-Dowleh and Kashef al-Saltaneh, illustrated the increasingly active attempts by Iranians to construct railways with Iranian capital as early as the 1880s, a little over a decade after the 1872 Reuter Concession.

While Mostashar al-Dowleh did not contemplate the possibility that the state would undertake railway construction, Kashef al-Saltaneh envisaged active state involvement as a more desirable option. Although he considered the involvement of fellow "Easterners" in Iranian railway construction as a more realistic option given the financial weakness of the Qajar state, he observed the international trend of active state involvement in the railway sector, particularly among latecomers to the Industrial Revolution and sparsely populated countries. Therefore, at roughly the time that Russian state involvement with railways in the Caucasus was impressing Farahani on his way to Mecca, Kashef al-Saltaneh articulated the benefits of considering railways as state

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159 Adamiyyat, *Andisheh-ye Taraqqi*, 323.

160 Shireen Mahdavi, *For God, Mammon, and Country: A Nineteenth-Century Persian Merchant Haj Muhammad Hassan Amin al-Zarb (1834-1898)* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), Chapter Six.

projects rather than schemes of entrepreneurs, indicating the gradual evolution of opinions with regard to the economic role of the state among the Qajar political elite.[161]

Furthermore, as indicated by Mostashar al-Dowleh's plans, profitable railways that transport Shi'i pilgrims would be legitimate projects as long as they had a positive impact on agriculture and industry as well. In contrast to the modernist consensus by the early Pahlavi period that viewed popular religious practices and sometimes Islam as incompatible with modernity symbolized by the railway, Mostashar al-Dowleh did not consider any popular religious practices among Shi'i Iranians as obstacles to achieve progress. In fact, his plans were submitted with an unambiguous endorsement of some members of the ulama. These characteristics found in the late nineteenth-century Iranian imaginations of railways underwent further changes by the rise of Reza Khan in 1921. In the next section, I will discuss how these characteristics of nineteenth-century railway imaginations changed in the first few decades of the twentieth century.

Imagining an Iranian Railway during the Constitutional Period

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161 Kamran M. Dadkhah points out the evolution of Iranian economic thought in three phases. The first phase is the period of economic liberalism that stressed attracting global capital in the nineteenth century. The second phase is the emergence of nationalism that attempted to mobilize domestic capital since the Constitutional Revolution. The third phase is the period of state dominance in economy from the 1920s. I argue that the shift in trends was far more gradual and often preceded political developments, as indicated by such examples as Mostashar al-Dowleh's attempts at generating capital among Iranian merchants. See Kamran M. Dadkhah, "From Global Capital to State Capitalism: The Evolution of Economic Thought in Iran, 1875-1925," *Middle Eastern Studies* 39, no. 4 (2003): 140-158.

By the turn of the twentieth century, expatriate Persian-language newspapers such as the Calcutta-published *Habl al-Matin* fed Iranian readers with reports on railway projects in Iran's adjacent lands. By this time, as discussed in Chapter Two, Iran was surrounded by railway systems in India under British rule, Central Asia under Russian rule, and the Ottoman Empire. In particular, the construction of the Hejaz Railway, which was funded by donations from Muslims all over the world, received attention.[162] With future railway projects that extended to cities just across Iran's western border, such as Van and Mosul, it appeared that Iran was falling behind in acquiring the new technology that seemed to guarantee economic prosperity elsewhere.

The Constitutional Revolution that started in 1905 changed the political context of discussions regarding railway construction. Most significantly, while proponents of railway construction prior to the revolution had to rely on their informal ties to share their proposals with influential merchants and members of the ulama, the Constitutional Revolution enabled them to discuss the matter in the legislative body, the Majles, with other elected representatives. In this new context, the issue of railway construction became a matter of public debate, sometimes recorded in drafts of legislation proposed by various groups. For instance, although unimplemented, the bill to establish a national bank included a clause that would give the bank the right to construct railways throughout Iran.[163]

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162 For instance, see "Rah ahan-e hejaz," *Habl al-Matin* (December 10, 1900), 22-3, and "Rah ahan-e dameshq," *Habl al-Matin* (March 25, 1901), 21.

163 Mashruh-e Mozakerat-e Majles-e Shura-ye Melli. Dowreh-ye 1, Jalaseh-ye 29 (January 19, 1907), 4 (the page number corresponds to the online version)

Even when discussions did not result in legislation, railway advocates now had the option of gathering as an informal group to discuss potential railway projects and have their voices heard in the form of petitions on the floor of the Majles. In 1910, a commission named the Rescue Commission (*komisiyun-e nejat*) was formed with the purpose of establishing an Iranian company that would construct a railway with Iranian capital. Its members included such prominent figures as Arbab Keykhosrow, Sani' al-Dowleh, Aqa Seyyed Zia al-Din, Hajji Mo'in Bushehri, Kashef al-Saltaneh, Hajj Mohammad Hoseyn Amin al-Zarb, the son of late Hajj Mohammad Hasan Amin al-Zarb, and Mostashar al-Dowleh, the son of late Mirza Yusef Khan Mostashar al-Dowleh, among others.[164] Although the commission ultimately failed to achieve its goal, the report composed by its appointed members was read in the Majles as a petition in January 1911. Rather than allowing Russia to continue to express its desire for railway concessions in Iran, the report urged the government's serious participation in railway construction by Iranians, which would require a national bank, with half the capital from the government and the other half from contributions by Iranians.[165] Despite the failure of the commission, their proposal illustrated the growing desire among Iranian merchants and intellectuals for the state to play an active role in railway construction, while maintaining

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http://www.ical.ir/index.php?option=com_mashrooh&view=session&id=20029&Itemid=38 (retrieved on September 21, 2014).

164 Mojtaba Malakuti, *Rah Ahan-e Iran* (Tehran: Chapkhaneh-ye Khandaniha, 1948), 22-3.

165 Ibid., 24.

the private character of the project through the proposed national bank that relied partially on contributions by Iranians.

The most influential proposal for a trans-Iranian railway during the Constitutional period came from Sani' al-Dowleh, the German-educated constitutionalist and a member of the Rescue Commission, during his tenure as the Minister of Finance in the spring of 1908. Just like previous advocates of railway construction, Sani' al-Dowleh came from a prominent family. His brother was Mehdi Qoli Khan Hedayat Mokhber al-Saltaneh, and the daughter of Mozaffar al-Din Shah was his wife. He also had extensive experience in Europe from when he had accompanied Naser al-Din Shah there in 1873 and received education in Germany.[166] The proposal came about two months before the end of the First Majles period due to the counterrevolution led by Mohammad 'Ali Shah, and thus remained unimplemented. Nevertheless, it influenced debates on the route and source of funding for the Trans-Iranian Railway that took place in the post-WWI period.

He articulated much of his proposal in the Majles when he wrote a treatise called *Rah-e Nejat*, which was written about six months prior to introducing the bill. In the treatise, Sani' al-Dowleh listed four duties of a government in order for the welfare of its citizens: 1) military power to secure the assets and lives of people; 2) a justice system to protect people from oppression; 3) a modern education system so that people would acquire necessary knowledge and skills for survival; 4) a transportation system, especially a railway system, so that "people of this country can transport cheaply and

166 Morteza Qoli Khan Sani' al-Dowleh, *Rah-e Nejat: Resayel-e Qajari, Ketab-e Avval* (Tehran: Nashr-e Tarikh-e Iran, 1984), 5.

easily from places near and afar what they need for life."[167] A transportation system was particularly important because, unlike a modern education system whose benefits would become apparent only after several generations, the benefits of having an advanced transportation system were immediate.[168] Thus, in contrast to previous proposals that envisaged primarily private investment or loans as potential sources of funding, in the midst of optimism with the power of the new constitutional government, Sani' al-Dowleh considered railway construction an urgent duty of the government.

The problem for the Iranian government was, in Sani' al-Dowleh's view, unlike Europe, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire, Iran did not have an efficient system of taxation. Thus, the new constitutional government of Iran needed a way to tax its citizens, particularly the wealthy, who were not paying taxes proportionate to their wealth. This point was developed into a concrete solution when he proposed the bill for a trans-Iranian railway to the Majles in 1908. In the bill, Sani' al-Dowleh advocated the imposition of taxes on essential consumption items of sugar (*qand va shekar*) and tea with the rate of ten shahi per tabrizi man (approximately three kilograms) of sugar.[169] Although this would hit the poor more severely, by imposing indirect tax on consumption items, collecting taxes would be theoretically less problematic for the Qajar government, which did not have the means to collect direct tax effectively from the population. Sani' al-

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167 Ibid., 10-11 and 17.

168 Ibid., 15.

169 Mashruh-e Mozakerat-e Majles-e Shura-ye Melli. Dowreh-ye 1, Jalaseh-ye 263 (April 25, 1908), 2-4 http://www.ical.ir/index.php?option=com_mashrooh&view=session&id=20263&Itemid=38 (retrieved on September 20, 2014).

Dowleh's proposal to tax sugar and tea reemerged later on in the form of the state monopoly on the sale of sugar and tea, ratified by the Fifth Majles in 1925 to generate funds for the Trans-Iranian Railway.

Financing the railway would be a problem even with taxes on sugar and tea. Therefore, rather than opening the entire line at the same time, Sani' al-Dowleh advocated the construction of a north-south trans-Iranian railway between the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf, opening section by section in a gradual manner. He argued that, because railway construction would be costly, the Iranian government should construct the most lucrative section of the railway first and spend the profits from operating that section to build other sections. Once the entire trans-Iranian railway started its operation, he predicted that the lower transportation cost would enable Iranian farmers to sell their agricultural products to distant cities and countries.[170] Thus, like previous advocates of railway construction, he conceived the benefits of railways primarily in economic terms.

Sani' al-Dowleh's proposal shared another assumption about the impact of railways. With regard to reliance on animal-powered transport, he assured that railways would not eradicate animals. Rather, the reliance on animal-powered transport would increase because the total volume of trade in Iran would increase significantly and animal-powered transport would be indispensable in carrying goods from railway stations to cities and villages.[171] Like advocates of railway construction prior to the Constitutional

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170 Ibid., and Morteza Qoli Khan Sani' al-Dowleh, *Rah-e Nejat,* 16.
171 Ibid., 22.

Revolution, Sani' al-Dowleh conceived animal-powered transport supplementary to rail transport rather than mutually exclusive.

Outside the Majles and circles of politically active constitutionalists, too, larger segments of society were exposed to the idea that Iran needed a railway for "progress." The burgeoning Iranian press of the Constitutional period contributed to the heightened awareness of broader political, economic and social issues. The Constitutional Revolution ushered in a rapid proliferation of newspapers that functioned as a public forum to discuss contemporary issues. Particularly important in a society with a low literacy rate like Iran was the distribution of political cartoons such as the satirical newspaper known for its cartoons *Kashkul*, which was edited by Sheykh Ahmad Majd al-Eslam Kermani, who also edited the Constitutionalist newspaper *Neda-ye Vatan*.[172] *Kashkul* printed several cartoons with regard to railway construction in Iran,[173] among which two contrasting cartoons from 1908 captured the constitutionalists' growing impatience with the absence of railways in Iran (Figure 3.1). The cartoon below showed a steam train with a caption that read, "This is a European railway that travels twelve to twenty *farsakh* per hour."[174] In contrast, the cartoon below showed two kinds of animal-powered transport, a horse-drawn carriage with a broken wheel and camels. The caption above the carriage read, "This is an Iranian railway that travels one *farsakh* per hour in a two-day trip from

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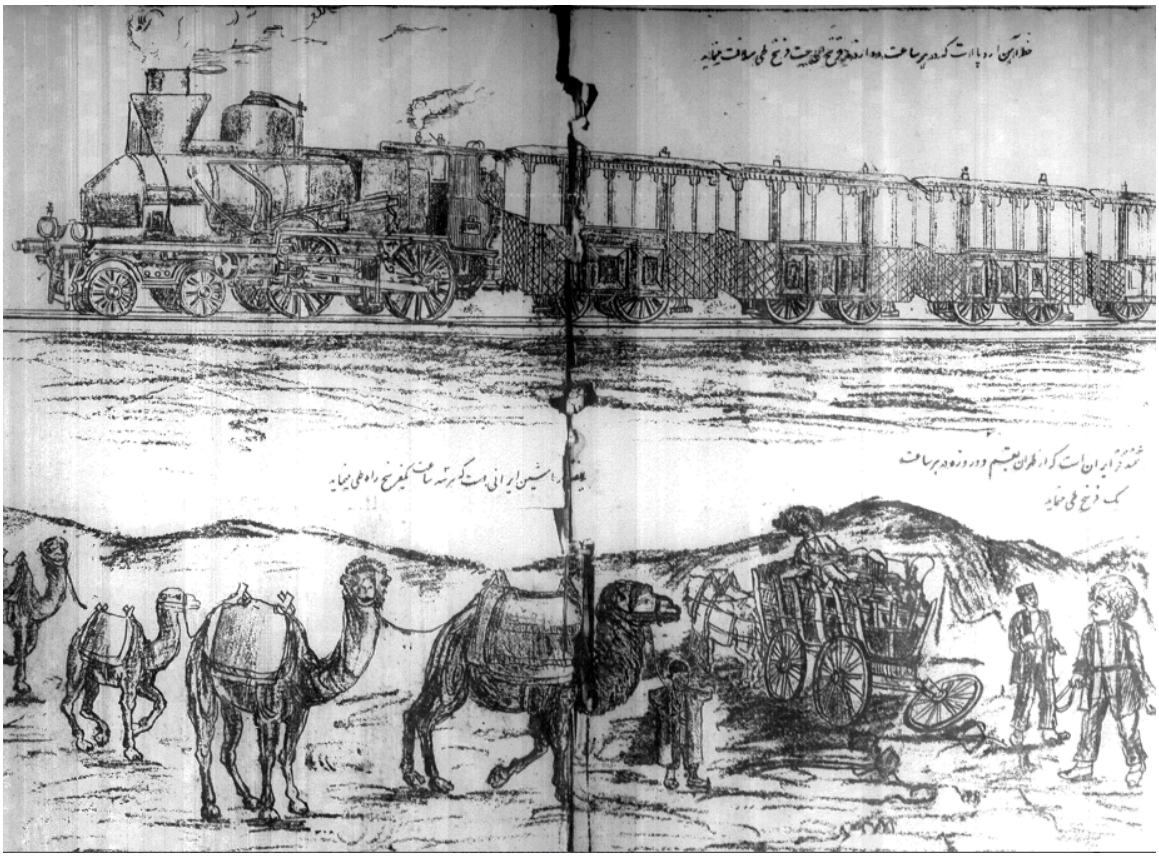
172 Shiva Balaghi, "Print Culture in Late Qajar Iran: The Cartoons of 'Kashkul,'" *Iranian Studies* 34 (2001): 167.
173 Ibid., 175-7.
174 *Kashkul*, May 12, 1908. One *farsakh* is approximately six kilometers.

Tehran to Qom." The camels were even slower, with the speed of "one *farsakh* every three hours."[175]

The cartoon also captured the gradual shift in the perception of animal-powered transport in the Iranian nationalist discourse at a time when horse-drawn carriages were gradually disappearing from European cities. While the discourse in the Naseri period did not see any contradiction in the symbiotic relationship between animal-powered transport and the railway, the cartoon in *Kashkul* depicted animal-powered transport as an opposing category to the railway, which embodied European modernity. Notably, the horse-drawn carriage, the quintessential "new" mode of transport in the previous period, was lumped together with camel transport in contradistinction with the steam power of the railway. Thus, rather than imagining Iran's future in which the railway *and* animal-powered transport comprised a high-speed transportation system to foster economic growth, the cartoon presented a dichotomous view in which Europe and Iran were juxtaposed by the presence of either the railway *or* animal-powered transport. In this view, Europe became characterized not only by the presence of the railway but also by the absence of animal-powered transport.

175 Ibid.



(Figure 3.1) Juxtaposing Iran and Europe. *Kashkul*, May 12, 1908. The cartoon provides one of the early examples of visualizing the dichotomy between "civilization" with railways and "backwardness" without them.

Due to the bombardment of the Majles and its subsequent closure in 1911, followed by the chaos during World War One, when Iran became a battleground for warring empires, proposals made during the Constitutional Revolution remained unimplemented. Nevertheless, the Constitutional period was significant in the evolution of Iranians' imaginations of railways because discussions about railway construction found new vehicles of expression such as the Majles and the rapidly growing Iranian press. As the example of the Rescue Commission indicated, railway advocacy among

prominent constitutionalists could find a larger audience by filing a petition to the Majles, where the petition was read out loud to representatives. Notably, some members of the commission included those who had expressed great interest in matters of railway construction prior to the Constitutional Revolution, including Kashef al-Saltaneh. In addition to the Majles, constitutionalist newspapers disseminated the need for a railway in Iran to a broader audience of literate and illiterate Iranians through recitations of newspapers at social gatherings and coffeehouses as well as political cartoons that visually conveyed the central message that Iran was lagging behind Europe due to the absence of railways. These new media popularized the idea of Iran's need for a railway with an active involvement of the Iranian state. Importantly, the call for state involvement did not necessarily preclude possibilities of railway construction by foreign entrepreneurs backed by their governments, as illustrated by Sani' al-Dowleh's negotiations with Germans for a railway project during his tenure as the Minister of Finance in 1910.

Some of the ideas articulated during the Constitutional Revolution were to be implemented after the rise of Reza Khan, such as the imposition of consumption taxes on sugar and tea to fund the railway project. Yet, the chaos that ensued after the invasion of Iran by both Allies and Central Powers during the war halted further discussions of railway construction among Iranians within Iran, although prominent figures in exile such as Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh and Hoseyn Kazemzadeh Iranshahr remained active in Berlin. The hiatus ended after World War One. The controversy over the 1919 Anglo-Persian Agreement and the rise of Colonel Reza Khan following the 1921 coup

engendered a new context in which railway construction by Iranians occupied one of the central concerns of the new regime.

Ratifying the Railway Act

The early 1920s witnessed a series of military campaigns launched by the new regime of Reza Khan, which would continue sporadically throughout the early Pahlavi period. The campaigns attempted to end provincial disorder and suppress semi-autonomous movements that mushroomed in response to the weakness of the Qajar state during and immediately after World War One. In this political context, the new regime faced the need to move troops promptly to volatile provinces, including the province of Lorestan, located on the strategically crucial route between Tehran and the oil-rich western Persian Gulf province of Arabestan (present-day Khuzestan), where the British maintained a strong presence. Hence, simultaneous with the renewed interest in railway concessions among imperial powers discussed in Chapter Two, the Majles and the Iranian press debated possible railway and road construction as a way to extend the authority of the central state and create a national economy with Tehran at its center by improving provincial security.[176]

In the Iranian press, too, railway construction became a major topic. Unlike in the previous decades, however, the issue was not limited to railways. The process of automobilization and the advent of aviation in other parts of the world forced Iranian

176 For an example of Majles debates of road and railway construction, Mashruh-e Mozakerat-e Majles-e Shura-ye Melli, Dowreh-ye 4, Jalaseh-ye 103, June 11, 1922.

modernists to reconsider the absence of railways in Iran in the broader context of the global technological hierarchy. For them, the absence of railways in Iran encapsulated the widening gap between the "civilized (*motamadden*)" world that underwent a series of revolutionary changes in transport, which would facilitate transformations in various realms of life, and "backward (*'aqabmandeh*)" Iran, which would stagnate due to the absence of new modes of transport.

Two juxtaposed cartoons printed in *Setareh-ye Sobh* in 1925 exemplified the trend visually (Figure 3.2).[177] The first cartoon portrayed the state of civilization in the world. A young female figure, possibly an anthropomorphic representation of the world, and the smiley sun were surrounded by blessings of technological advancements in the background such as an iron suspension bridge and factories whose chimneys were smoking all over the sky. In the foreground, the reader would find a steam train, an airplane, and an automobile with a chauffer and a gentleman in European clothing and a silk hat smoking a cigarette. In contrast, the cartoon that depicted the state of civilization in Iran featured an old, sullen female figure, possibly an anthropomorphic representation of Iran, and the sun surrounded by mountains and a mosque in the background. In the foreground were men in traditional clothing with traditional long pipes (*chopoq*) using animal transport such as a donkey.

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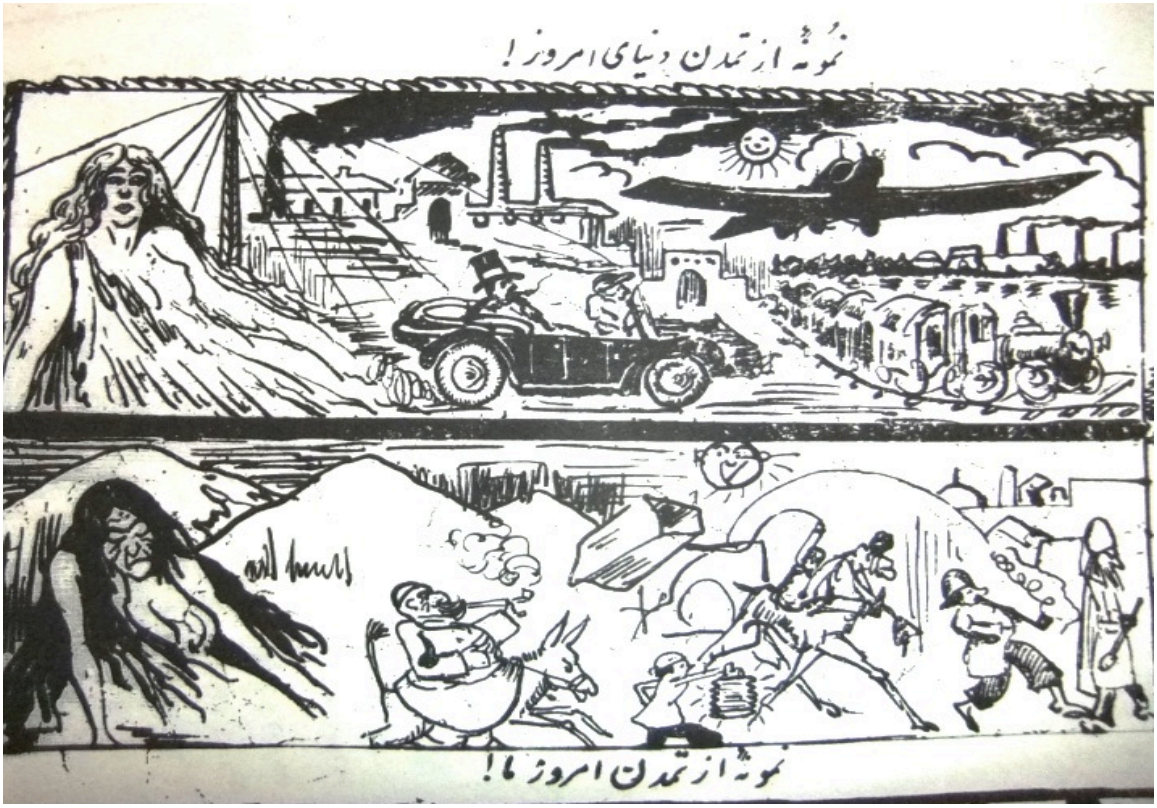
177 The newspaper *Setareh-ye Sobh*, edited by Mirza Ebrahim Khan Nahid, was also published under such different names as *Aflak*, *Khalq,* and *Nahid*. It started its publication in 1921 and quickly became a popular reformist paper with a socialist leaning famous for its abundant caricatures. Although Nahid was arrested five times for criticizing the new regime, as Chapter Five discusses, he shared the sense of urgency for social change and the need to reform the ignorant "masses" with the Pahlavi state. See *Salnameh-ye Pars*, 1927-28, 64-65.



(Figure 3.2) Juxtaposing Iran and the world. *Setareh-ye Sobh*, July 4, 1925. The caption to the cartoon above says, "an example of the civilization in today's world!" and the caption to the cartoon below says, "an example of our civilization today!"

Thus, in the cartoons, Iran was characterized by the lack of modern transport technologies and industries as well as by the persistent presence of animal transport and religiosity, which corresponded to differences in preferred commodities between the gentleman smoking a cigarette and Iranians using the long pipe. In other words, the difference between new modes of transport and animal transport was no longer a matter of technology alone. Rather, it signified two completely different, and implicitly

incompatible, cultural orientations. One stood for growth, industry, and a European lifestyle devoid of any public expressions of religiosity while the other stood for decline, backwardness, and a traditional lifestyle with a visible presence of Islam.[178]

A letter that Mehdi Qoli Khan Hedayat Mokhber al-Saltaneh received from an acquaintance named Mohammad Ali also indicated the end of a symbiotic relationship between railways and animal-powered transport by the 1920s. The letter was written immediately following Majles discussions of railway construction in February 1927. It included a poem:

> In the West, they need railways because they don't have donkeys
>
> We have donkeys. When do we need railways?
>
> The enemies of railways are loving friends of donkeys
>
> We are the loving friends of donkeys and enemies of railways
>
> Railways uproot donkeys from the country
>
> We uproot whoever wants railways
>
> Until there would be Sir Camel and His Highness Donkey
>
> When would it be permissible for us to boast of railways?[179]

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178 For other examples that speak to the difference between new transport technologies and animal transport, see "Mosaferin ba havapeima miravand, ba shotor savari bar migardand," *Khalq*, April 10, 1926, "Mardom beh taraf-e taraqqi va 'elm!" and "Ma…..!" *Khalq*, July 17, 1926, and "Marasem-e esteqbal az yek kandid-e vekalat dar iran," *Nahid*, April 17, 1928.

179 Hajj Mokhber al-Saltaneh Hedayat, *Khaterat va Khatarat* (Tehran: Ketabforushi-ye Zovvar-e Tehran, 1984), 372.

In contradistinction with the imaginations of such figures as Hajji Pirzadeh and Sani' al-Dowleh, the poem did not consider animal-powered transport as supplementary to railways. Animal-powered transport did not comprise an integral part of the economy in this poem. Instead, it mocked those who did not support the railway project for various reasons by characterizing them as friends of donkeys and enemies of railways. Nevertheless, as discussed below, disagreements over the railway project did not stem from aversions to railways. Rather, dissenting voices concentrated on the issues of prioritizing railways over roads and choosing the most beneficial route.

Debates about constructing a railway intensified during the Fifth and Sixth Majles periods. Following the first elections after the 1921 coup, the Fifth Majles started in early 1924, with the majority of representatives endorsing drastic reform policies such as conscription and male sartorial regulations as a way to build a centralized state and a homogeneous nation. It was during the Fifth Majles that the 1925 law of state monopoly of sugar (*qand va shekar)* was ratified to fund the future railway project. Furthermore, in early 1926, the Fifth Majles decided to hire German and American engineers introduced by the American financial advisor Arthur Millspaugh for the preliminary survey to determine the future railway route.[180] After the preliminary survey, "the law of permitting the construction of a railway between Khormusa, the port of Mohammareh, and Bandar-e Gaz (*Qanun-e Ejazeh-ye Sakhtman-e Rah Ahan ma bein-e Khormusa va Bandar-e*

180 Mahbubi-Ardakani, *Tarikh-e Mo'assesat-e Tamaddoni-ye Jadid, Jeld-e Dovvom*, 344-5.

Mohammareh va Bandar-e Jaz)," or the Railway Act, was submitted to the Sixth Majles on February 22, 1927, and hastily ratified two days later.[181]

As new legislation passed the Majles in the 1920s, making the beginning of the Trans-Iranian Railway project an imminent future of Iran, Majles representatives and Iranian journalists familiarized themselves with updated knowledge of transportation issues in the world. For instance, Ali Mohammad Oveisi, a member of the commission established in 1924 under the Ministry of Public Works to consider various options for a railway project,[182] had published his ideas in the Iranian press in 1923, prior to his appointment in the commission. In the articles, he argued for the possibility of building road rails, instead of railways, from Bandar-e Gaz on the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf via Firuzkuh, Damavand, Tehran, Qom, Borujerd, and Khorramabad, in order to reduce construction costs.[183] As Oveisi's articles illustrated, by the 1920s, railway technology, especially steam locomotives, did not enjoy the status of being the latest technological innovation. Therefore, because Iran's railway project was taking place so late, it had to be justified in comparison with other new modes of transport. *Iranshahr*, a modernist newspaper published in Berlin, also introduced a better alternative to steam locomotives.

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181 Mashruh-e Mozakerat-e Majles-e Shura-ye Melli, Dowreh-ye 6, Jalaseh-ye 67, February 24, 1927. http://www.ical.ir/index.php?option=com_mashrooh&view=session&id=20824&Itemid=38 (retrieved on February 25, 2015)

182 Luft, "The USA and the Trans-Iranian Railway," 125.

183 IOR/L/PS/10/794, "Sustainability of Roadrails in Persia," Loraine to Lord Curzon, June 27, 1923. The road rail transport Oveisi discussed was the Stronach-Dutton system, which received much attention as a cheaper alternative to a standard gauge railway system for difficult terrains with many curves.

The Iranian writer of the articles, who was trained at the German locomotive maker Borsig Company, proclaimed, "these two (civilization and transportation) need each other. Without one, the other is unimaginable," while also arguing that steam locomotives were not sufficient to make Iran truly "civilized (*motamadden*)."[184] He contended that Iran needed to follow the recent trend of electrifying railways in Europe and America, partly due to the negative impact of the smoke on the health of the Iranian population.[185]

The most serious challenge to a railway project came from the global trend of automobilization. In Tehran alone, 1,140 automobiles existed already in 1926, excluding vehicles owned by the Ministries of Finance and War, and the number of cars was rapidly increasing.[186] To encourage economic activity and facilitate the movement of troops, the Iranian state invested much in road construction throughout the 1920s, particularly in key areas such as Lorestan, Arabestan, Mazandaran, and Azarbaijan.[187] Majles representatives also considered road construction as a less time-consuming alternative to railway construction. For instance, assuming that the railway project would take a long

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184 "Rah Ahan," *Iranshahr*, December 1926, 597.

185 "Rah Ahan," *Iranshahr*, February 1927, 762.

186 "Ehsa'iyeh—Otumubil va Docharkheh va Sodur-e Tasdiqnameh-ye Ranandegan," *Ettela'at*, August 30, 1926.

187 In the fiscal year of 1927-28, over 2 million qeran was proposed for road construction in Lorestan, followed by Mazandaran and Azarbaijan, both of which received 1.5 million. IOR/L/PS/11/209, R. Clive to Austen Chamberlain, March 14, 1927.

time to finish, Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh advocated road construction and transportation by trucks in 1924, without eliminating the possibility of a railway system in Iran.[188]

Although few individuals questioned the feasibility of the railway project in public for fear of political ramifications, many were skeptical of it and preferred road construction, given the cost of railway construction and the burden it would put on the population when roads could extend to more areas. European and American observers often raised the question and wondered why it had to be a railway, as did Mohammad Mosaddeq, the future leader of the oil nationalization movement.[189] In response to these critiques, *Ettelaʿat*, a daily newspaper that would acquire a semi-official status in the 1930s, printed articles that argued against road construction. The articles admitted that places far from the railway could decline, but they ultimately found more problems with automobiles and roads. According to the articles, while recent automobilization benefited Europe and the United States, for countries like Iran, which were less integrated in the global market, cars would bring more harm than good. For one thing, places in between destinations would be skipped. Therefore, while villagers used to sell eggs, yogurt, and other items along the road, they could not do so anymore because automobiles moved too fast and never made a stop in small villages, making the poor suffer while benefiting the wealthy who would drive around for recreation. Furthermore, automobilization would

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188 Mashruh-e Mozakerat-e Majles-e Shura-ye Melli, Dowreh-ye 5, Jalaseh-ye 58, September 16, 1924, 4. http://www.ical.ir/index.php?option=com_mashrooh&view=session&id=20881&Itemid=38 (retrieved on February 20, 2015)

189 Homa Kazouzian, ed., *Musaddiq's Memoirs* (London: Jebhe, National Movement of Iran, 1988), 10.

increase the consumption of gasoline in Iran too rapidly.[190] In short, while the articles did not clarify why the railway would be a better option, by presenting automobilization in a negative light, they implicitly responded to some of the arguments publicly and privately made against the Trans-Iranian Railway project.

Besides the question of automobilization, the Railway Act received criticism from those who suspected another imperial ploy behind the project. For instance, Mosaddeq erroneously suspected the British role in the choice of the route to connect the Caspian Sea with the Persian Gulf as a way to gain easy access to the Soviet border.[191] Other Majles representatives also suspected it, as the Minister of Education insisted that the issue of the Railway Act was pertinent only to domestic politics and that there should be no place for foreign politics.[192] Mokhber al-Saltaneh, the Minister of Public Works, responded to this suspicion by reassuring him that the railway project was strictly about domestic politics and reminded the Minister of Education that late Saniʾ al-Dowleh, his own brother whose credentials as a constitutionalist were unquestionable, also proposed a north-south line as the best route for the nation.[193] The fact that Mokhber al-Saltaneh understood exactly what the Minister of Education insinuated was indicative of the prevalence of the conspiratorial view among other Majles representatives.

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190 "Otumobil Jaye Khatt-e Ahan," *Ettelaʿat*, August 14, 1927, and "Az Otumobil Natijeh-ye Maʾkus Migirim," *Ettelaʿat*, August 16, 1927.

191 Katouzian, *Musaddiq's Memoirs*, 10.

192 "Mozakerat-e Majles dar Atraf-e Rah Ahan," *Ettelaʿat*, February 22, 1927.

193 "Mozakerat-e Majles dar Atraf-e Rah Ahan," *Ettelaʿat*, February 23, 1927.

The issue of the exact route of the planned railway received the most significant attention in the Majles. The Railway Act was remarkably vague about the route, which was to be modified a number of times before the end of construction in 1938 due to such issues as cost and technical problems. The bill only stated that the route would be from Bandar-e Gaz on the Caspian Sea coast to Mohammareh (present-day Khorramshahr)/Khormusa (present-day Bandar-e Emam Khomeini, Bandar-e Shahpur before the Islamic Revolution) via Tehran and Hamadan.[194] In response, Majles representatives from the provinces that would not be on the railway route proposed various alternative routes so that their regions would benefit from the project. For instance, Seyyed Yaʾqub Anvar from Shiraz stated that the line from the Caspian Sea and Tehran to Isfahan, Shiraz, and Bandar Abbas would be more beneficial. He also introduced a proposal printed in the newspaper *Shafaq-e Sorkh* to extend the railway to Chabahar in coastal Baluchistan.[195] Others proposed a line to other urban centers such as Mashhad, Tabriz, Bushehr, and Anzali. Representatives from Azarbaijan in particular requested the insertion of Qazvin between Tehran and Hamadan to ensure that the

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194 Importantly, the finalized route differed significantly from this proposal. Bandar-e Shah (present-day Bandar-e Torkaman), instead of Bandar-e Gaz, became the northern terminus, and the railway did not go through Hamadan. The extension to Mohammareh was not part of the initial trunk line completed in 1938, either. For the Majles proceedings, see Mashruh-e Mozakerat-e Majles-e Shura-ye Melli, Dowreh-ye 6, Jalaseh-ye 66, February 22, 1927, 4. http://www.ical.ir/index.php?option=com_mashrooh&Itemid=38&majlestype=2&term=13 (retrieved on February 21, 2015)

195 Mashruh-e Mozakerat-e Majles, Dowreh-ye 6, Jalaseh-ye 66, 6-7.

railway would reach a city that lay on the way from Tehran to Tabriz.[196] Therefore, as the construction of the Trans-Iranian Railway became imminent, Majles representatives expressed regional interests so that the province they represented would benefit from the costly project that all Iranians had to fund through the taxes they paid for sugar and tea regardless of where they were in Iran.

Although the exact route continued to go through modifications well into the 1930s, the general goal of connecting the Caspian Sea with the Persian Gulf remained intact. A nationalist newspaper *Kushesh* justified the benefits of the route from Bandar-e Gaz to Khormusa via Tehran by pointing out problems with alternative routes. The East-West route to connect India with the Mediterranean Sea would cross a large barren land in eastern Iran. Furthermore, Indo-European trade would be much cheaper and easier by sea, making the railway a less attractive option. Equally importantly, the route would force Iran to use foreign ports for trade. The article continued to discredit the Tabriz-Tehran route and the Anzali-Tehran route, noting that both Azarbaijan and Gilan were already well-connected to international trade routes and had no trouble exporting their agricultural products to Russia. Thus, the benefits of the railway would be comparatively small. In contrast, the article argued, because fertile northeastern provinces of Khorasan and Mazandaran were currently isolated from the outside world, building a railway from the port of Bandar-e Gaz in Mazandaran to Tehran and further south would dramatically

196 "Mozakerat-e Majles dar Atraf-e Rah Ahan," *Ettelaʿat*, February 22 and 23, 1927.

facilitate Iran's export, improving the trade balance.[197] Therefore, the particular route from the southeastern shore of the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf was justified in terms of its positive impact on the national economy that would engage in international trade.

When Mokhber al-Saltaneh introduced the bill to the Majles, he justified the route primarily from an economic standpoint. First of all, by connecting the two seas, Iran would have access to the global market. Moreover, by going through Hamadan, the railway would tap into the economic resources of the rich provinces of western and northwestern Iran. Furthermore, the railway would result in the cultivation of Astarabad (present-day Gorgan) and the province of Mazandaran, which would be connected with the fertile provinces of Lorestan and Khuzestan via Tehran. Finally, compared to other routes, the route from Bandar-e Gaz to Mohammareh/Khormusa would cost less due to the shorter distance between the two termini and the less serious geographical obstacles.[198] Therefore, the argument was based not only on the perception of existing economic wealth but also on the prediction of the future transformation that the railway would bring about in regions with the highest agricultural potential. In this sense, the common criticism that the choice of this railway route was unwise because it did not pass through large cities except for Tehran is correct yet fails to capture the perception of railway technology shared by Iranian modernists. Admittedly, some Majles representatives such as Mosaddeq expressed skepticism with regard to profitability due to the absence of large cities on the route, but there were also others who imagined that the

197 IOR/L/PS/11/209, From Percy Loraine to Austen Chamberlain, October 31, 1925.
198 Mashruh-e Mozakerat-e Majles, Dowreh-ye 6, Jalaseh-ye 66, 4.

Trans-Iranian Railway would transform the empty landscape and create fertile lands and thriving cities.

Importantly, no Majles representative brought up the issue of pilgrimage traffic. In contrast to some of the past proposals by both Iranians and Europeans, the Shi'ite holy city of Qom was not on the route initially proposed in the Railway Act. Instead, the proposed route largely resembled the route that Reza Shah expressed his preference for during his tenure as prime minister, which was a north-south route from the Caspian Sea to Mohammareh via Tehran, Saveh, Soltanabad (present-day Arak), and Khorramabad.[199] The plan was later modified in the 1930s to go through Qom most likely due to the geographical difficulties and higher cost of other possible routes. Yet, the fact that pilgrimage traffic did not receive any attention in Majles debates before 1927 deserves attention, along with the absence of any overt references to pilgrimage traffic even among advocates for the Tehran-Mashhad line. Chapter Six will continue the discussions on the attitude among Iranian modernists toward Islamic religiosity in the context of the railway project.

Conclusion

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199 IOR/L/PS/10/794, "Railway Construction in Persia," Foreign Office to Charles Greenway of APOC, January 7, 1924. The choice of the Tehran-Saveh-Soltanabad alignment deserves attention here, because this route, just like the proposed Tehran-Hamadan route in the Railway Act of 1927, did not include the holy city of Qom on the route, indicating that initial plans ignored the lucrative pilgrimage traffic, unlike Mostashar al-Dowleh's proposals. It is also noteworthy that after the north-south line, Reza Khan considered the northwestern line from Tehran to Tabriz and the western line from Tehran to Khaneqin the second and third most important.

This chapter traced the evolution of Iranian imaginations of railways. Iranian ideas of a railway project changed in some important ways between the 1860s and 1927. By 1927, Iran's political elite ratified a bill that considered railway construction as a state project to connect the Caspian Sea with the Persian Gulf via Tehran, funded by taxation on the general population as well as loans from the newly established national bank. As this chapter examined, these characteristics should not be taken for granted. Iranian travelers and diplomats gradually formulated ideas about a trans-Iranian railway through witnessing and learning about railways outside of Iran. For instance, the reliance on foreign capital among a small group of the political elite such as Mirza Hoseyn Khan Moshir al-Dowleh in the 1860s and 70s quickly gave way to an emphasis on Iranian capital by the late nineteenth century. By the early twentieth century, the emphasis shifted to the role of the state, partly influenced by the witnessing of state involvement with economic development through railways, such as the case of the Russian state in the Caucasus. Also, as advocates of railway construction moved from the margin of the decision-making process in Qajar politics to its center—the Majles—after the Constitutional Revolution, it seemed natural that they hoped to take the matter in their own hands with the support of Iranian citizens, or the voters; hence, the emphasis on a trans-Iranian railway project undertaken by the state partially with the funds acquired through taxation on citizens.[200]

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200 In reality, due to property qualifications and the exclusion of women, only a fraction of the population voted in the First Majles. For the restrictions on voters, see Janet Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911*, 64.

Iranian ideas about such issues as the role of the state, pilgrimage traffic, and animal-powered transport shifted significantly, but what consistently appeared from the 1860s to the beginning of the Pahlavi period was the widely shared belief in the transformative power of railways, particularly their role in transforming the economy. The title of Sani' al-Dowleh's treatise "The Road to Salvation (*Rah-e Nejat*)" revealed the tremendous power to transform Iran that was assigned to railways. Similar to European and American officials and investors, Iranian modernists viewed railways as facilitators of economic development since the Naseri period. Unlike European and American officials and investors, however, Iranian modernists envisioned the creation of a national economy with Tehran as its center. Therefore, unlike a number of plans proposed by the British and Russians that aimed to secure imperial economic interests in their spheres of influence, it was inconceivable in Iranian proposals of railways to ignore Tehran. The ultimate goal was to connect regional economies to Tehran and create a national economy, which would trade with foreign countries through ports on the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf or borderland cities such as Tabriz, Mashhad, and Khaneqin.

By the early Pahlavi period, however, Iranian modernists assigned another transformative power to railways: cultural transformation. As the juxtaposed cartoons in *Setareh-ye Sobh* indicated, the existence of new modes of transport was reimagined to encompass a broader notion of "civilization (*tamaddon*)" and "progress (*taraqqi*)." The possession of railways by Iranians became associated with the comprehensive package of the "modern" man, making a cultural transformation to create a homogeneous nation equally important to an economic transformation. I will discuss Iranian modernists'

attempts at creating a homogeneous nation through railways, particularly railway journeys, in Chapter Six. The next chapter will examine how diverse groups of people who lived along the railway route experienced the construction of the Trans-Iranian Railway and the concomitant increase of the presence of the Pahlavi state in the period after the ratification of the Railway Act.

Chapter 4: Living Along the Railway Route

(Figure 4.1) Juxtaposing the Naseri period and the Reza Shah period. *Nahid*, 30 October, 1928. Naser al-Din Shah's military campaign against Lors (right), and Reza Shah's military campaign against Lors (left).

Introduction

In 1928, the satirical newspaper *Nahid* printed juxtaposed political cartoons (Figure 4.1).[201] On the right page was a portrayal of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar's military campaign to the southwestern province of Lorestan. The cartoon depicted Naser al-Din Shah on a donkey proceeding across an empty, plain field, while leading a swarm of veiled women.

201 *Nahid*, 30 October, 1928.

The Lors simply retreated on their donkeys as the shah approached. The caption below the cartoon made its ridicule of the previous regime unambiguous by stating that Naser al-Din Shah was "preoccupied with donkey-riding among women of his harem," despite the urgency of the situation.

In contrast, the cartoon on the left page showed Reza Shah's visit to Lorestan and the Persian Gulf province of Khuzestan in October 1928 to commemorate the opening of a new road from Borujerd to Dezful as well as to inspect the progress with railway and port construction.[202] It showed Reza Shah and his retinue in motorized vehicles passing on a road penetrating the mountains of Lorestan. Spotting the landscape on both sides of the road were black tents in which nomadic tribes of Lorestan were forcibly sedentarized and watchtowers where guards were stationed to prevent highway robbery.[203]

By juxtaposing the two eras, *Nahid* celebrated the triumph of the central state in tribal areas in this new era of improved infrastructure and an equally improved means of transport. While Naser al-Din Shah's campaign led only to the temporary retreat of the Lors and did not achieve long-term control of Lorestan, the cartoon on the left proclaimed the success of the new Pahlavi regime in establishing its permanent presence, thereby controlling recalcitrant tribes along the route of the new road. According to the

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202 IOR/L/PS/11/209, 234/22/6410. R.C. Parr to Lord Cushendun, 1 November, 1928.

203 The policy of forced sedentarization of nomadic tribes was implemented more broadly only in the 1930s. See Kaveh Bayat, "Riza Shah and the Tribes," in Stephanie Cronin ed. *The Making of Modern Iran: State and Society under Riza Shah, 1921-1941* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 217.

caption below the cartoon of Reza Shah's campaign, the new regime was to "open the greatest economic and military road in Iran."[204]

In reality, the Pahlavi state did not successfully pacify Lorestan until the early 1930s, several years after the opening of the road. Even after the pacification, attacks on trucks that passed through Lorestan continued to occur throughout the 1930s. Moreover, after the abdication of Reza Shah in 1941, security in Lorestan deteriorated and thus revealed the precariousness of the "pacification" that had taken place in the previous decade. Furthermore, many of the roads built in the Reza Shah period were incapable of handling heavy traffic, as became clear after the Allied invasion in 1941. Thus, the proclamation of the triumph of central authority in *Nahid* turned out to be premature. More importantly, the juxtaposition of the two cartoons exemplified a widely shared sense among urban elites of the early Pahlavi period that the inherently hostile tribal forces continued to defy the authority of both the previous regime and new one, and only the new regime under Reza Shah could put an end to recalcitrant tribal power.

As recent scholarship critiques, for a long time, Iranian historiography accepted this fundamental tenet of nationalist agendas. As Stephanie Cronin argues, state-society relations in rural Iran of the early Pahlavi period should be seen as a "more erratic narrative" influenced by contingent factors, rather than a linear narrative in which an eternal conflict between tribes and central authority inevitably culminated in violent

204 *Nahid*, 30 October, 1928.

repressions of tribal forces by the state.[205] Contemporary press sources like *Nahid* may be adequate sources to examine the "peculiar frame of mind"[206] widely shared among urban elites with regard to the "tribal problem,"[207] but they do not shed much light on how the vast majority of Iranian society experienced the development of transportation infrastructure.

This chapter uses Iranian, British, and Danish archival sources as well as published documents in Persian and European languages to discuss the impact of railway construction on Iranian society, both rural and urban, whose mobility increased in both voluntary and compulsory manners. It pays particular attention to how various social groups such as merchants, landowners, tribes, and construction laborers interacted with state- and quasi-state institutions that dramatically increased their presence in the wake of railway construction. This chapter is by no means a comprehensive study of rural Iran, both settled and nomadic, in the early Pahlavi period. Nevertheless, it provides snapshots of how the specific conditions produced by railway construction affected various parts of Iran. Also, discussions here are generally limited to provinces that experienced comparatively drastic changes due to the development of transportation infrastructure, namely, Lorestan, Khuzestan, the Caspian province of Mazandaran, and the site of

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205 Stephanie Cronin. *Tribal Politics in Iran*, 3.

206 For a discussion of the "peculiar frame of mind" that envisaged the confrontation with tribal groups inevitable, see Kaveh Bayat, "Riza Shah and the Tribes," 217-8.

207 Cronin raises a similar question to Bayat's in her problematizing of the "tribal problem." See Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran*, Introduction, especially 2-4.

Tehran Station, although evidence from other provinces also receives consideration when necessary.

Some recent studies of rural Iran have consciously moved away from the "peculiar frame of mind" prevalent among urban elites. These bottom-up studies have emerged in response to the tendency among scholars to overemphasize the Pahlavi state's policies toward rural Iran without giving due attention to rural communities themselves. The state-centric approach often assumes inhabitants of rural Iran received top-down reforms passively or helplessly, as they were molded into modern citizens.[208] In contrast, some studies of rural Iran, including anthropological studies, focus on the resistance of rural Iran. These studies have enriched our understanding of rural Iran in the early Pahlavi period by delving into how the powerful such as landowners and tribal khans, as well as the not-so-powerful, such as peasants and tribal members, reacted to pressures exerted by the state and the powerful in their communities.[209] They have also demonstrated that state policies planned in Tehran often did not work effectively when they were actually implemented.[210]

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208 For a classic work with this approach, see Amin Banani. *The Modernization of Iran, 1921-1941* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961). For a recent critique of state-centrism in Iranian historiography, see Cyrus Schayegh, "'Seeing Like a State': An Essay on the Historiography of Modern Iran," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42 (2010): 37-61.

209 Kaveh Bayat, "Riza Shah and the Tribes," Richard Tapper. *Frontier Nomads of Iran: A Political and Social History of the Shahsevan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), and Mohammad Gholi Majd. *Resistance to the Shah: Landowners and the Ulama in Iran* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000).

210 For example, see Richard Tapper's discussion of how forced sedentarization of tribes worked for the Shahsevans. See Tapper. *Frontier Nomads of Iran*, 288-294.

Nevertheless, both approaches focus mainly on political life in their discussions of rural Iran, where state policy and rural resistance clashed through revolts. Even though bottom-up studies stress that the confrontation between central authority and tribal forces in rural Iran was not inevitable, they still accept the view that confrontation ultimately characterized state-society relations in rural Iran during the early Pahlavi period. I take a different stance here. Rather than focusing on rural resistance as the key to understanding how inhabitants experienced state power, this chapter considers the methods of engagement used by inhabitants in rural Iran to face the increasing presence of state- and quasi-state institutions as their tactic in a de Certeauian sense at a time when strategies of the state became more impactful in rural Iran. Thus, instead of focusing on moments of state-society confrontations, this chapter examines how railway construction increased more mundane interaction between state- and quasi-state institutions and various segments of society, which could lead to dramatic moments of confrontations or to more subtle methods of redefining relations between state and society.

In fact, "resistance" characterizes only part of society's encounters with state power. It presumes that rural Iran ultimately reacted confrontationally to fend off outside forces. In contrast, "engagement" implies that inhabitants of rural Iran resituated themselves vis-à-vis new players in local politics into their everyday lives as the best option available, because the new players ceased to be external to the web of power relations in rural Iran. Thus, the politics of engagement in rural Iran entailed a constant process of negotiation between inhabitants along the railway route with both the state and

non-state entities, with the aim of solving practical issues that arose as railway construction accelerated.

Booming Towns on the Route

On October 16, 1927, the construction of the Trans-Iranian Railway started with the official ceremony at the planned site of Tehran Railway Station, which was located in a largely arid area outside the city. In the following years, the construction started in both northern and southern termini, where the construction of ports simultaneously proceeded, so that the line would eventually meet in central Iran. Initially, based on the bill submitted to the Majles in April 1928, the German-American syndicate that included the German firms of Philipp Holzmann, Julius Berger, Siemens Bauunion, and the American Ulen Company, obtained the contract to undertake a survey of the planned railway route. Following the survey, the construction of trial sections to estimate the total cost of the project began, with the German firms starting from the northern terminus, while the Ulen Company undertook the construction from the Persian Gulf.[211] By 1930, however, Iran's financial crisis, coupled with Reza Shah's dissatisfaction with the completed trial section in the south led to the cancellation of the contract with the Ulen Company, followed by

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211 IOR/L/PS/10/794, Clive to Chamberlain, April 21, 1928, and Clive to Chamberlain, May 5, 1928. While the German firms maintained close relations with the Soviet Union, the Ulen Company included limited French and British participation to reduce the financial risk. Specifically, in return for the guarantee that the German firms would buy Soviet construction materials, the Soviet Union agreed to give free transit for German materials. IOR/L/PS/10/794, Clive to Chamberlain, April 5, 1928. For the Ulen Company's preference for Anglo-French participation, see Clive to Chamberlain, March 9, 1928.

the termination of the contract with the Germans in 1931.[212] For the next two years, the Pahlavi state attempted to continue the construction on its own. When that turned out to be unfeasible due to the lack of technical expertise, in 1933, Iran signed a contract with the Danish-Swedish consortium Kampsax, which had experience with railway construction in the Turkish Republic.[213] Kampsax oversaw the construction of the Trans-Iranian Railway until its completion in 1938, with many managerial and high-ranking engineering positions occupied by Danes, Swedes, Norwegians, Swiss, Germans, Czech, and Hungarians, among others.

The construction of the Trans-Iranian Railway, along with concurrent road construction projects, created booming towns where there used to be none. For instance, from 1933, Salehabad in the northern part of the Persian Gulf province of Khuzestan started to develop as the temporary northern railhead of the southern line. It emerged as a hub for switching from rail to motor transport. Recollecting his 1936 visit to the town, an American likened it to a nineteenth-century mining town in the American West, with "the ramshackle character of its hastily built wooden buildings and its broad unpaved streets."[214] The small town boasted the visible presence of European workers and engineers, including Italians, Germans, Russians, the French, Danes, and Swedes, along

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212 Luft, "The USA and the Trans-Iranian Railway," 131-2. For the distrust between Germans and Americans from the beginning, see IOR/L/PS/10/794, Clive to Foreign Office, May 14, 1930.

213 Kauffeldt, *Danes, Orientalism, and the Modern Middle East*, 167.

214 Henry Filmer. *The Pageant of Persia* (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1936), 45-46.

with Iranians. Also, in the main street, a Russian restaurant that served vodka catered to workers from Russia and the Caucasus.[215]

Salehabad expanded further as the temporary railhead, thanks to the government policy of not allowing trucks to operate between Bandar-e Shahpur, the terminus on the Persian Gulf, and Salehabad. Furthermore, the government ordered that garages for trucks be moved from Ahvaz to Salehabad to encourage the use of the railway for transporting goods.[216] Even when Salehabad lost its status as a railhead after the grand opening of the Trans-Iranian Railway, the city continued to grow under its new name Andimeshk, thanks to the presence of railway- and automobile-related facilities such as depots and repair factories. By 1943, various stores and bars made downtown Andimeshk busier, with a conspicuous presence of mostly American soldiers stationed in Iran.[217]

While Andimeshk developed into a middle-sized industrial city, other booming towns did not transition to permanent urban centers. For instance, in the late-1920s, after the beginning of the construction of the railway and a service road, Keshvar in the southwestern province of Lorestan was transformed from a remote hamlet that was a two-day journey by horse or mule from Khorramabad, the capital of the province, to a bourgeoning yet small village that took less than two hours by car from Khorramabad. The expanding village boasted homogeneous houses for workers as well as a small bazaar and teahouses, where patrons from various places spoke different foreign

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215 Ibid.

216 IOR/L/PS/12/3400/PZ1442, Khuzestan Diary, December 1932.

217 COWI Archives (former Kampsax), Kurt Olsen. "Storm Over Mellemøsten (Storm over the Middle East)" (Copenhagen: H. Hirschsprungs Forlag, n.d.), 65.

languages.[218] Yet, it shrank back to its original size once the construction was over, as did ʿAbbasabad by Veresk Bridge in Mazandaran (Figure 4.2). Such shrinkage occurred even in more established cities such as Borujerd.[219]

(Figure 4.2) ʿAbbasabad during construction. COWI Archives, Photo Album F57b, 77.

Because the railway project could impact urban growth or decline, groups of local merchants and residents found having railway stations in their cities an important issue, as exemplified by the case of Mohammareh and Khormusa. Immediately after the ratification of the Railway Act, the Mohammareh Chamber of Commerce sent a telegraph

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218 COWI Archives, Kasse 106, Ingolf Boisen. "Banen Skal Bygges Paa Seks Aar" Copenhagen: Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck, 1946, 138-140.

219 COWI Archives, Kasse 106, Povl Buhl, "Mit liv Orienten (My Life in the Orient)," and COWI Archives, Kasse 106, Boisen. "Banen Skal Bygges Paa Seks Aar," 70.

to Tehran, protesting that the selection of Khormusa as the southern terminus was a poor choice. Instead, the telegraph requested that the railway should start from Mohammareh for the following reasons: 1) since Khormusa was not a thriving port compared to Mohammareh, building an entirely new city would be expensive; 2) because Khormusa stood on marshlands, land reclamation would be costly; 3) Khormusa harbor would be unsheltered from storms; 4) there was no fresh water in Khormusa; 5) since Khormusa was far from existing transport routes, it would cause inconvenience to merchants and the public.[220] 175 merchants, traders, and notables of Mohammareh and Abadan also petitioned jointly to the Majles to conduct more research by sending specialists to the region and find out the suitability of Mohammareh as the terminus rather than Khormusa. They cited additional advantage of Mohammareh over Khormusa, including the lower cost of construction because there was no need to build bridges to cross two major rivers and the strategic advantage of protecting Iran's territorial rights due to Mohammareh's proximity to the Iraqi border.[221]

Only a few weeks after petitions from Mohammareh and Abadan, another petition came from Hajj Gholamali Me'mar, who advocated the route from Khormusa to Dezful and claimed, "whoever has a different view is either mistaken or has an ulterior motive."[222] In particular, he claimed that the Khormusa route should be easily done in conjunction with the building of the Ahvaz Dam, which he thought could be done in two

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220 IOR/L/PS/10/794, Clive to Chamberlain, April 23, 1927.
221 Majles Library Archives (ML) 6/14/13/1/70.
222 ML6/5/6/1/67.

million tomans, unlike European engineers who had evaluated the cost to be three million tomans. Moreover, he added that he could build the railway for six thousand tomans per mile.[223]

The route of the railway went through a number of modifications before 1938, but the southern terminus of Khormusa was not changed. It was constructed under its new name, Bandar-e Shahpur. Mohammareh was located too close to the border with Iraq and the disputed Shatt al-Arab to serve as the terminus for the national railway, which justifiably raised security concerns, as the Iran-Iraq War would demonstrate during the 1980s.[224] We do not have enough evidence to generalize the case of local residents' reactions to the originally ratified route of the Trans-Iranian Railway. It is conceivable that local communities in other urban centers petitioned for the change of the railway route, particularly such major cities with a large presence of influential merchants as Isfahan and Shiraz, which only bore the burden of the project through taxation yet did not directly benefit from it.[225]

Iranian construction companies also found opportunities to participate in the Trans-Iranian Railway project, particularly in areas with less geographical obstacles. As was the case with the Turkish railway project, the consortium acted as a "virtual agency of the state" as the overseer of the entire construction, including all building activities,

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223 Ibid.

224 IOR/L/PS/11/209, From Clive to Austen Chamberlain, November 26, 1927.

225 About two decades after the Railway Act, during the 1946 tribal insurrections, the Qashqa'is, supported by the Bakhtiyaris, demanded that the railway should be extended to Isfahan, Shiraz, and Bushehr. See Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 235.

negotiations with subcontractors, payment to employees from state funds, and medical service, staffed mostly by Iranians.[226] At the same time, the consortium divided the route into small sections, which were tendered out to construction companies from various countries, including twenty Iranian companies such as Kalantari and Neka.[227] Furthermore, Iranian companies were among hundreds of subcontractors that engaged in various aspects of construction such as asphalting service roads, laying rails, ballasting the embankment, and building railway-related facilities like hospitals and stores for workers. For instance, along with Italian and German companies, Iranian companies Moqtader (Razan) and Etteka secured the contract for ballasting the embankment in Salehabad, while Iranian Armenian companies got the contract for laying the sleepers and rails in the same area. These companies sometimes had ties to prominent figures within Iran, as was the case with Moqtader, in which Yamin Esfandiari (Yamin al-Molk), the former governor of Bushehr, was a partner.[228]

Furthermore, in the Caspian Sea province of Mazandaran, some landowners took advantage of the increased demand for Mazandarani lumber. Supplemented with lumber from elsewhere such as Dalmatia and Luxemburg, lumber from Mazandaran was widely used to build bridges, especially since oak trees from such regions as Lorestan were not

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226 Kauffeldt, *Danes and the Modern Middle East*, 167-8 and 176.

227 Some of the European contractors included Angiolini Balocca and Mottura Zaccheo of Italy, Hochtief A. G. Essen of Germany, Brüder Redlich of Czechoslovakia, and Richard Costain of Britain. Vezarat-e Toroq, *Rah Ahan-e Sarasar-e Iran: 1306-1317* (Tehran: Vezarat-e Toroq, 1938), 41-4.

228 IOR/L/PS/12/3400, Khuzistan Diaries, November 1933 and December 1933.

suitable.[229] In short, although existing scholarship mentions only the involvement of European companies, particularly Kampsax, the railway project also provided business opportunities, albeit limited, to local entrepreneurs and landowners.

Land Disputes and Compensations

The railway project also caused dislocation. In agricultural communities in low-altitude Mazandaran areas such as Sari, Shahi (present-day Qaʾemshahr), and their surroundings, former rice-cultivating peasants became laborers due to forced dislocation. Facing a high mortality rate among laborers because of malaria in the region, the state prohibited rice cultivation in the immediate vicinities of railway construction sites to eradicate the breeding grounds for mosquitos. Then it ordered rice farmers to either move elsewhere or take other occupations. With no prospects for finding a job elsewhere, many opted for employment on railway construction sites.[230]

The Railway Act of 1927 included an article added later on, which stated that the government was responsible for providing just compensation for property owners of eminent domain.[231] This was implemented at least in some cases. When the Ulen Company planned Ahvaz Railway Station, a new town around it, and the railway track

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[229] COWI Archives, KX 14, "Ingeniøren og Eventyret (Consortium Kampsax)," Indberetning nr., 38-9, and Eduard Gruner. *Iran — "Persien": Erfahrungen und Beobachtungen vom BAU der Trans-Iranischen Bahn*. Basel, 1937, 25.

[230] "Ingeniøren og Eventyret (Consortium Kampsax)," Indberetning nr. KX 14, COWI Archives, 41-2, Ingolf Boisen. "Banen Skal Bygges Paa Seks Aar" Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck, Copenhagen, 1946, Kasse 106, COWI Archives, 72-73, and Svend Buhelt "Mit Persiske Eventyr," 26.

[231] Mahbubi-Ardakani, *Tarikh-e Moʿassesat-e Tamaddoni-ye Jadid*, 342.

from the station in 1929, around fifty houses and stores in Ahvaz village had to be destroyed. The owners received the total compensation of 25,200 toman, although disputes existed between the powerful merchant Mo'in al-Tojjar and occupants of the houses regarding who legally owned the properties.[232]

In other cases, landowners did not receive compensation. Many landowners suffered from arbitrary land confiscation and damage done to their properties by the development of transportation infrastructure. Buildings, farms, orchards, and forests were confiscated often without compensation and turned into railways and roads, depriving the landowners of their primary source of income. Particularly in Mazandaran, landowners lost their lands, which were used for construction projects or incorporated into the massive estates that the Pahlavi family acquired throughout the period. Furthermore, the fact that landowners adjoining new roads were prohibited from building water channels either across the roads or underneath them often made it difficult for them to maintain the *qanat*, an underground irrigation system that played a pivotal role in agriculture of largely semi-arid Iran.[233] Railway engineers made an extra effort to protect the *qanat* by coating it with reinforced concrete, but not all landowners benefited from this precautionary measure.[234]

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232 IOR/L/PS/11/290, Ahwaz Diary, January, February, and April 1929.

233 IOR/L/PS/11/209/3859, Economic Report No. 37, "Road Tolls. The Duzdab-Meshed Road," 10 August 1922.

234 COWI Archives, Kasse 106, Buhl, "Mit liv I Orienten."

Landowners often responded to the increased presence of state power by petitioning.[235] For instance, Banu Mirzadeh Erfeʾi and Maʾsumeh Ardabili, large landowners near Maragheh, complained to the Majles about damages done to their orchards by a train crash. When a train crash occurred in 1941 near Maragheh, on the railway route from Tehran to Tabriz under construction, the Railway Organization cut trees of orchards nearby to prevent the spread of fire, leaving the lands barren. Ardabili persistently petitioned fourteen times to both Reza Shah and Mohammad Reza Shah in 1941 and 1942, which resulted in two investigations by engineers and representatives of the city to evaluate the appropriate monetary compensation for the damages to her orchards. [236]

Petitions did not come from powerful landowners alone. Villagers in Kachu Mesqal in the province of Isfahan collectively filed a petition to protect their water rights. When the construction of the line from Qom to Yazd started, Zavareh, another village roughly twenty five kilometers from Kachu Mesqal, became a planned site of a railway station. The problem was that Zavareh stood in a completely arid area. The Railway

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235 For an example in Amol, Mostafa Nuri, *Asnad-e Mazandaran dar Dowreh-ye Reza Shah* (Tehran: Ketabkhaneh, Muzeh, va Markaz-e Asnad-e Majles-e Shura-ye Eslami, 2009), "Eʾteraz-e gholamreza mokhtari beh tasarrof-e amlakesh dar asar-e shuseh kardan-e rah-e amol beh barforush (ML6/73/39/9)," 207-9. For Barforush, "Eʾteraz beh taghir-e naqsheh-ye jaddeh-ye sari-barforush (ML7/151/33/1/48)," 209. For Babol, "Taqaza-ye varseh-ye seyyed larimi baraye residegi beh masʿaleh-ye kharabi-ye karvansara dar babol (ML8/33/32/78)," 215. For Babolsar, "Taqaza-ye pardakht-e gheramat-e takhrib-e yek sakhtman dar babolsar (ML12/83/41/13)," 228. For Sufiyan in East Azarbaijan, ML10/159/16/1/349. For Anzab in Ardabil, ML13/147/15/1/190. For Sabzevar in Khorasan, ML9/60/17/7/278.

236 ML13/147/15/1/190 and ML13/148/15/1/233.

Organization planned to take the qanat water of Kachu Mesqal to Zavareh, but villagers protested that transporting precious water out of the village could ruin the agriculture in the village. Losing water to Zavareh would mean insufficient water to keep alive the over one hundred fruit-producing trees in the poor village.[237] Thus, when the issue involved the entire community rather than individual landowners, villagers submitted a collective petition to have their voice heard.

Because of the involvement of the state in developing transportation infrastructure, most complaints were directed at various state institutions. Nevertheless, in some cases, petitioners attempted to solve disputes between themselves and contractors through the intervention of the state. For instance, in his petition to the Majles, a landowner in Qeshlaq (present-day Garmsar) asked for an investigation by state agents when an Irano-Greek contractor for railway construction destroyed his orchard by setting fire to trees.[238] In another case, an agent representing the landowners of Zirab in Mazandaran submitted a complaint to the Majles to solve a dispute between them and railway construction contractors, who cut trees from their forests without payment.[239] In both cases, the petitioners were unable to solve the issues among themselves or through the mediation of local governmental entities such as municipal and provincial governments and the Office of Forestry (*edareh-ye jangalbani*) and hoped for intervention by the central government. Considering that the contractors were

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237 ML12/57/25/1/50. For another collective action from Veramin, ML13/162/16/1/412.
238 ML10/175/25/1/47.
239 Nuri, *Asnad-e Mazandaran*, "Shekayat-e ahali-ye zirab az ʿadam-e pardakht-e qeimat-e ashjar tavassot-e kontoratchiha (ML9/117/33/29)," 265.

undertaking a state project, and considering that the petitioners had attempted to solve the conflicts through provincial governments, they could have blamed the negligence on the abstract "state." Nevertheless, they tried to win the support of the Majles by showing deference to the institution while complaining about specific contractors and local state institutions in a way somewhat akin to how Egyptian peasants under Mehmet Ali handled disputes with intermediaries of the central state.[240] Moreover, as the state became increasingly bureaucratized in the early Pahlavi period, the interactions that petitioners had with the "state" became diversified. They took their case to various state institutions to have their voice heard by at least one of them.

Despite the existence of records of these isolated cases of petitioning, anecdotes of disputes related to railway construction are extremely fragmented. We get only a glimpse of how the development of transportation infrastructure impacted agricultural lands, their owners, and their engagement with various state institutions. In order to show how petitioning worked for local inhabitants more closely, the discussion below examines the ways in which similar cases of land confiscation unfolded in a relatively well-documented location from approximately the same period.

Like landowners elsewhere in the country, landowners near the site of Tehran Station experienced the confiscation of their lands in the Reza Shah period. The propaganda in the censored Iranian press represented the immediate vicinities of the site of Tehran Station in south Tehran as "underdeveloped," "empty," "silent," and "the lowest" places that became a thriving center of the city only thanks to the Trans-Iranian

240 Chalcraft, "Engaging the State," 304-6.

Railway project.[241] The area had not been incorporated into Tehran's expanding urban area. Nevertheless, it was not an empty field waiting to be developed, either. Various landowners possessed agricultural lands, caravanserais, and icehouses there before the station was built. All of the landowners, some of whom were absentee landowners, possessed at least 4,000 square meters, many of them around 40,000 square meters. In some cases, according to the petitioners, the Ministry of Roads did not even notify them about the destruction of their properties and the construction of the station.[242] In other cases, only a portion of the confiscated land became part of the station, while the rest was given to prominent families such as the Farmanfarma family.[243] When they found out about the confiscation and destruction of their properties to make way for Tehran Station and surrounding railway facilities, the landowners sought compensation and complained to various branches of the government, including the *'adliyeh* court, the Ministry of Roads, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Justice, contractors, municipal governments, the Majles, and the shah.

Petitions to the Majles increased particularly in the immediate aftermath of the abdication of Reza Shah in 1941, when the return of lands confiscated under Reza Shah was announced.[244] No longer fearful of possible ramifications, former landowners

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241 For instance, see "Jashn-e Residan-e Rah Ahan be Tehran –Yek Ruz-e Bozorg Por az Masarrat va Shadmani," *Ettelaʿat*, 19 February 1937, and "Rah Ahan-e Iran," *Ettelaʿat*, 15 March, 1939, and *Iran-e Emruz* 1, no. 1 (1939), 48-52.

242 ML12/38/10/1/11 and ML13/119/6/1/126.

243 ML12/28/3/1/10.

244 There were petitions from 1935 and 1936, but they were exceptional. ML10/134/7/1/2.

expressed dissatisfactions with the negligence of authorities regarding their properties during the Reza Shah period. Nevertheless, petitioners had to go through a long process to get their cases investigated at all. Theoretically, confiscated lands that had been turned into public spaces such as stations, squares, and roads were excluded from the law of returning confiscated lands and were freely handed to municipal governments. On the receiving end of free gifts, the municipal governments did not feel obliged to compensate the former landowners, nor were they financially capable of doing so. Various ministries, especially ministries like finance and justice, also did not consider compensating former landowners to be part of their responsibilities. The Ministry of Roads simply forwarded the petitions to municipal governments.[245] Contractors had nothing to do with land acquisition.

Therefore, petitions were often tossed around from one branch of the government to another. For instance, a certain Hajj Seyyed Hasan Sabuni complained in late 1941 that the Ministry of Roads and the municipal government of Tehran did not investigate the confiscation of his land and caravanserais for seven years during the Reza Shah period. According to Sabuni, the ministry had claimed that the investigation of land losses was the responsibility of municipal governments as decided in a ministerial meeting, but the municipal government did not respond to his petitions, either.[246] In the case of Ali Qal'eh Vaziri, the municipal government responded to his request and claimed that his case had

245 ML12/38/10/1/22
246 ML13/100/2/1/44.

been taken to the court, but no response came afterwards.[247] In the case of Ali Akbari in late 1945, appraisers from the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Roads, as well as local trustees evaluated the value of the confiscated land together and determined that the Railway Organization (*bongah-e rah ahan*) should compensate accordingly, but nothing followed the investigation.[248] In the case of Esma'il Firuzi, the investigation determined that the Ministry of Roads should compensate him 10,000 riyals, but it did not do so, as the ministry considered it the municipal government's responsibility.[249]

As the examples above demonstrate, the involvement of multiple institutions made it difficult for previous landowners to demand compensation from any particular branch of the state.[250] The apparent absence of a standardized procedure and a clear sense of institutional divisions of labor confused petitioners, and possibly government employees as well. As a result, seemingly similar cases were handled differently, while the result was similar among different cases. Many petitions apparently got lost in the nebulous labyrinth of various state institutions and their complex divisions of turfs.

What is crucial here is not so much the fact that petitioning functioned as a resistance of the weak, because petitioning usually failed to achieve its goal to be an effective form of resistance. In fact, the question of whether petitioning was successful or not was beside the point. Regardless of its effectiveness, local inhabitants continuously

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247 ML/13/117/6/1/10. For a similar case where the court took the case but nothing followed, see ML12/28/3/1/10.
248 ML14/179/18/1/409.
249 ML11/205/11/1/8.
250 ML13/101/2/1/76.

engaged with a number of state institutions in the process of navigating through the new state bureaucracy and new non-state entities in rural Iran such as international contractors and Kampsax. The frequency with which landowners had to deal with these institutions was evidence that rural Iran had become increasingly integrated into the web of power relations not only between state and society but also among various state and non-state actors.

On "Friendly" and "Unfriendly" Tribes of Lorestan

While landowners engaged with the changing power relations through petitions in response to threats posed to their properties, the vast majority of ordinary people who did not own land experienced the coming of the Trans-Iranian Railway differently. Most notably, many inhabitants along the route worked on construction sites as wage laborers. In this section, I will discuss the case of Lorestan, especially a part of southeastern Lorestan called Bala Gariveh, to examine how the railway project impacted a rural society that was both sedentary and nomadic, society, since the 1920s. Bala Gariveh serves as the most appropriate example to study the impact of the railway project, precisely because the area experienced only very limited penetration of the Iranian state power and European presence prior to the Trans-Iranian Railway project, compared to other provinces along the railway route such as Khuzestan and Mazandaran.

When Reza Khan came to power in the aftermath of the 1921 coup, Lorestan was politically decentralized, with the exception of the western part of the region, which was called Posht-e Kuh and is part of the Ilam province today. In contrast to Posht-e Kuh,

Pish-e Kuh, separated from Posht-e Kuh by a mountain range, did not have the presence of the state after the death of Naser al-Din Shah in 1896. In fact, governors sent from Tehran for tax collection could not even enter Khorramabad, the capital of Lorestan situated in Pish-e Kuh.[251] In Bala Gariveh, which lay southeast of Khorramabad and Pish-e Kuh, too, Lor tribes remained mostly autonomous until immediately before 1921. Various Lor tribes in Pish-e Kuh and Bala Gariveh, such as the Baharvands, Bayranvands, Judakis, Papis, and Sagvands did not form a large, stratified confederation, unlike the hierarchical structure the Bakhtiyari Confederation.[252] The influence of tribal khans over members of their tribes was also relatively weak.[253] The absence of the state and a dominant local ruler kept eastern Lorestan in "a chronic state of anarchy,"[254] which could disrupt the broader economy of Iran because of Lorestan's crucial location connecting the Persian Gulf with Tehran via Dezful, Khorramabad, and Borujerd.

Economically, Bala Gariveh was tied to Borujerd and Dezful rather than Khorramabad, which was tied more to its surrounding areas of Pish-e Kuh.[255] In particular, the nomadic Lors of Bala Gariveh traveled southwards to the vicinities of Dezful in winter and spring and sold such items as charcoal in Dezful, while purchasing such items as tea and sugar. C. J. Edmonds, a British officer, noted that during his 1917

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251 Sekandar Amanolahi, "Reza Shah and the Lurs: The Impact of the Modern State on Lorestan," *Iran & the Caucasus* 6, nos. 1-2 (2002): 199.
252 Ibid.
253 C. J. Edmonds, "Pish-i-Kuh and Bala Gariveh," *The Geographical Journal* 59: 5 (1922): 347.
254 Ibid., 336.
255 J. V. Harrison, "South-West Persia: A Survey of Pish-i-Kuh in Luristan," *The Geographical Journal* 108, nos. 1-3 (1946): 56.

trip to Lorestan escorted by local tribes, the Lors of Bala Gariveh such as the Judakis and Papis came down to Dezful en masse with their livestock for sale and built their black tents on the bank of Dez River.[256] Raiding and blackmailing caravans for protection also defined the economic interaction between city-dwellers with tribes of Lorestan. Constant pillaging by the Lors of Bala Gariveh closed trade routes that connected the Persian Gulf with Tehran in the 1910s. Settled cities and villages could also suffer from raids by the Lors, as the Bayranvands attacked Borujerd.[257]

The new regime's policies that I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, such as Reza Khan's military campaigns in the early 1920s and the concurrent road construction projects to connect Tehran with Khuzestan via Lorestan, occurred in this context. Furthermore, Reza Khan attempted to disarm the tribal populations. As was the case with other provinces, Tehran often attempted to achieve this by negotiating with tribal khans, following military campaigns, in order to convince them to accept such forms of incentives as subsidies and governorships as a quid pro quo for allegiance.[258] Moreover, in tandem with these attempts at restoring provincial order, the new regime implemented various policies to create a homogeneous nation. Conscription, sartorial

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256 C. J. Edmonds, "Pish-i-Kuh and Bala Gariveh (continued)," *The Geographical Journal* 59: 6 (1922): 438.

257 Jacob Black-Michaud, "An Ethnographic and Ecological Survey of Luristan, Western Persia: Modernization in a Nomadic Pastoral Society," *Middle Eastern Studies* 10, no. 2 (1974): 218.

258 For instance, such tribal leaders as the Vali of Posht-e Kuh and Dust Mohammad Khan of Baluchistan were initially coopted as local governors. See Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran*, Chapter One, Tribe and State: the 'Tribal Problem' in Iran.

regulations for men, and forced sedentarization were particularly disruptive to the tribal societies of Lorestan.[259]

By the late 1920s, tribal resistance in Lorestan largely lost momentum and became sporadic raiding by a handful of Lor tribes such as the Bayranvands, especially after the 1928 opening of the new road to connect Tehran and Khuzestan via Borujerd, Khorramabad, and Dezful. Therefore, the construction of the Trans-Iranian Railway, which took place primarily during the 1930s in Lorestan, did not play a role in restoring security in the region. Rather, it functioned to maintain the shaky stability in Lorestan by providing employment to tribes that had reached an agreement with the Pahlavi state during the 1920s.

The Papi tribe in Bala Gariveh experienced the coming of the Trans-Iranian Railway in a particularly drastic manner. Around 1920, the Papis comprised of about two thousand families, mostly nomadic pastoralists who spent summers in the territory between the future railway stations of Mazu and Bisheh and moved southwards to the vicinity of Salehabad in fall.[260] In the early 1920s, the Papis joined other tribes of Lorestan against Tehran's military campaigns, such as the 1923-24 campaign that ended with the executions of several Lor tribal khans. Yet, they agreed to disarm along with

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259 For local oppositions to these policies, see Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran*, Chapter Five, Rural Resistance: The Tribal Uprisings of 1929, and eadem., *Soldiers, Shahs and Subalterns in Iran*, Chapter Five, Reform from Above and Resistance from Below, 1927-1929.

260 Morad Hoseyn Papi. *Shenakht-e Il-e Papi, Jeld-e Avval*. Fourth Edition (Qom: Entesharat-e 'Esmat-e Qom, 1999), 134-5, and The National Archives (NA): WO106/5959, "Tribes of Luristan," 1943.

several other Lor tribes in the summer of 1925, with the understanding that they would be required to agree to a sedentarized life in the land distributed at the expense of nearby landowners, mostly Arabs.[261] During the tribal unrest in 1928, the Papi khan, who was released from captivity in Khorramabad upon the arrival of Reza Shah, worked as a liaison between the Lors and the shah, which resulted in the distribution of gifts to Lor tribal chiefs.[262] No detail is available regarding Papis' relations with the Pahlavi state between this incident and the early 1930s. Yet, while names of some other Lor tribes continued to appear in British documents as perpetrators of highway robberies and attacks on road and railway construction sites in the 1930s, the Papis ceased to appear in these documents after 1928.

Having established comparably amicable relations with the Pahlavi state, the Papis, along with some other tribes of Lorestan, secured employment on railway construction sites as laborers and sometimes even as more skilled laborers, while sometimes retaining their livestock and farms.[263] Though casualties on construction sites were high, the Papis also benefited from stable employment and the distribution of certain kinds of medicine at dispensaries and hospitals along the railway routes. Consequently, despite the widespread starvation in Lorestan during the Allied

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261 IOR/L/PS/11/290, Percy Loraine to Austen Chamberlain, July 14, 1925, and R. H. Clive to Austen Chamberlain, April 7, 1928. For continuing disputes over the arbitrariness of land distribution well into the 1930s, IOR/L/PS/12/3400, Khuzistan Diaries, February 1934, and IOR/L/PS/12/3404, Butler to Eden, May 28, 1936.

262 IOR/L/PS/11/290, R. F. Woodward, Major, Military Attache to British Minister in Tehran, May 4, 1928.

263 Papi, *Shenakht-e Il-e Papi*, p. 143 and NA, WO106/5959, "Tribes of Luristan."

occupation, the Papis appeared "very healthy and no cases of malaria or splenic enlargement were found among those examined," unlike other Lor tribes.[264] Thus, the Trans-Iranian Railway project created employment opportunities in a precariously pacified area to keep formerly nomadic tribes content and maintain security and state control in the region.

This attempt at establishing a lasting stability could pose a problem when construction projects came to a halt leading to increased unemployment. The danger of high unemployment first started to show its effect in the oil industry. By the early 1930s, the depression manifested itself in Iran. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company reduced the number of its employees in 1931, increasing unemployment in southwestern Iran. Barely able to survive, desperate former laborers for the company turned into tribal bandits, robbing on highways.[265] As this case indicates, there was only a blur and contingent distinction between "friendly" tribes that provided laborers and guards and "unfriendly" tribes that threatened rural security.

A similar danger plagued the railway project at the beginning of the 1930s, when construction slowed down owing to the lack of funds. In addition to a massive layoff of the clerical staff, the reduction of workers seemed inevitable in the summer of 1932, and by the beginning of 1933, the construction of new sections of the south line of the railway

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264 NA, WO106/5959, "Tribes in Luristan."

265 IOR/L/PS/12/3400/PZ983, Khuzestan Diary, November 1931.

was temporarily suspended.[266] By February, five hundred armed Arab tribesmen aligned with the Lors led by Yadollah Khan of the Bayranvand tribe attacked a railway workers' camp, killing some laborers and robbing about six thousand riyals.[267] The Bayranvands, joined by conscription deserters, had engaged in the kidnapping of prominent figures such as the governor of Lorestan, pillaging of villages, and highway robbery between Khorramabad and Dezful. By the beginning of 1933, they made passing through Lorestan difficult, especially for trucks carrying goods, although they engaged in transporting basic consumption items such as tea and sugar to make a profit, and local authorities of Khorramabad continued to purchase goods from them.[268] Nevertheless, their alliance with unemployed Arab tribesmen posed a serious threat to workers' camps and railway facilities. Thus, the practical issue of high unemployment in Lorestan activated the potential for disorder caused by "unfriendly" tribes.

Nevertheless, the Lor tribes' desire to remain "friendly" with the state and its institutions in Lorestan, including the Trans-Iranian Railway, was mutual if that friendliness ensured survival for tribal groups. The supposedly recalcitrant tribes such as the Bayranvands also explored ways to resituate themselves vis-à-vis new players in the region such as the Pahlavi state and the railway syndicate. At the beginning of 1933, in return for the safety of traffic, Yadollah Khan was demanding his appointment as the

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266 IOR/L/PS/12/3400/PZ6460, Khuzestan Diary, August 1932, and PZ3586, Khuzestan Diary, January 1933. For earlier layoffs, see IOR/L/PS/11/290/p2980, Ahwaz Diary, February 1930.

267 IOR/L/PS/12/3400/PZ3587, Khuzestan Diary, February 1932.

268 IOR/L/PS/12/3469, Hoare to John Simon, February 10, 1933.

governor of Lorestan, the withdrawal of Iranian troops from the province, and no stationing of a garrison there.[269] By this time, he led over 3,500 rebels in Lorestan. While his demands revealed his desire to maintain a decentralized structure of the previous eras, keep the central state out of Lorestan, and retain his power vis-à-vis local communities, another demand he made in the same year suggested his willingness to resituate himself in the face of new players in the province.

In March 1933, the Bayranvands kidnapped C.J. Carroll, the American director of the south line of the railway under construction. In his demands, Yadollah Khan asked the Pahlavi state to ensure the safety of his tribe and the distribution of land in return for the release of Carroll, indicating his desperation and willingness to choose sedentarization like the Papis. More importantly, he demanded that "certain members of the tribe must be given employment on the Persian Railway," which showed that his goal was more pragmatic than the complete rejection of the presence of the Pahlavi state.[270] Following the promise that his demands would be considered, Carroll was released from his third experience of captivity, while Yadollah Khan was captured and sent to Tehran in April.[271] Throughout the 1930s, the Bayranvands were exiled to various provinces of Iran, including Khorasan.

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269 IOR/L/PS/12/3469/PZ2230/E1106/333/34, from R.H. Hoare to John Simon, 10 February, 1933.

270 IOR/L/PS/12/3469/PZ2430/E2113/333/34, from A.E. Watkinson to R.H. Hoare on 16 March, 1933.

271 IOR/L/PS/12/3472A, Annual Report 1933, 71.

Such attacks on railway construction sites, workers' camps, and railway facilities could cause serious damage to the project. For instance, between February 1931 and January 1932, workers' camps and railway facilities were attacked at least ten times by nearby Arab tribes in interior Khuzestan alone, often resulting in injuries, deaths, and the loss of property and cash.[272] Furthermore, these attacks made it difficult to recruit laborers and thus hindered the completion of the railway project that symbolized Iran's New Civilization (*tamaddon-e jadid*). To solve the problem, soldiers were stationed to protect workers' camps and railway facilities.[273] In addition, local Lor and Arab tribesmen whose chiefs had reached an agreement with the state were employed as guards to placate them and prevent looting in return for government subsidies to tribal chiefs (Figure 4.3). This differed from the previously prevalent practice in road construction sites of allowing locally recruited guards to independently levy road tolls, as an unofficial compensation for their service.[274]

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272 IOR/L/PS/12/3400/PZ2969, PZ3627, PZ6327, PZ6646, PZ7292, PZ8023, PZ983, PZ 1507, PZ1955. Khuzestan Diaries, from February 1931 to January 1932.

273 IOR/L/PS/11/290/P3409, Khuzestan Diary, April 1928. However, the fact that Yadollah Khan found allies among conscription deserters may indicate the desperate conditions of the soldiers stationed to protect railway-related sites.

274 COWI Archives, Buhelt "Mit Persiske Eventyr," 46-50, and IOR/L/PS/11/215, Annual Report on the Persian Army, 31 December, 1925.

(Figure 4.3) Lor guards. COWI Archives, Photo Album F51a, 70.

As the experiences of the Papis and the Bayranvands illustrate, while the coming of railways and highways caused displacement and impoverishment among both sedentary and nomadic tribal communities, local inhabitants did not simply defy the penetration of state power as an outside force, embodied by local officials and governmental institutions. Rather, local inhabitants, including "unfriendly" tribes like the Bayranvands, actively attempted, if not always successfully, to gauge their positions vis-à-vis new political and economic entities that had become components of power relations in rural Iran. They demonstrated flexibility to changing conditions, even though they were not necessarily rewarded for the flexibility.

Again, after the completion of the Trans-Iranian Railway in 1938, "friendliness" based on the reward of employment turned out to be tenuous, as the completed railway could not create as many employment opportunities as construction sites for unskilled laborers. Consequently, cases of robbery increased.[275] When economic conditions got worse during the occupation by the Allied forces from 1941-45, payment and even ration to laborers could be halted.[276] To survive economic hardship, locals who lived along the railway often snatched the copper telephone wire off the poles.[277] In addition to such petty crimes, some locals resorted to raiding to survive the occupation. In late 1941, inhabitants of Zanjan County filed a petition, according to which, disorder ensued after the collapse of the central state in 1941. Exiled tribes returned to their homelands and resumed nomadic life, soldiers deserted the army, workers stopped receiving salaries, and even bread rations for laborers ran short. As economic conditions deteriorated, over three hundred laborers working in Zanjan on the railway project to connect Tehran to Tabriz became destitute and restless. They started to loot cities and villages under the pretext of railway needs, thus endangering the wellbeing of local inhabitants, who called for help from the Majles after unsuccessfully petitioning local authorities.[278]

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275 IOR/L/PS/12/3503, Intelligence Summary No. 23, 16 November, 1940.

276 Olsen. "Storm Over Mellemøsten," 68.

277 Joel Sayre, *I Served in the Persian Gulf Command* (Isfahan?: The Information and Education Branch, The Office of Technical Information, The Persian Gulf Command, 1945), 4. The locals may have been subsidized by the Pahlavi state before 1941 in order to prevent theft and vandalism, as was the case with the telegraph in the late Ottoman Empire and Meiji Japan. See Yakup Bektas, "The Sultan's Messenger," 692-3.

278 ML12/84/42/1/28. The case of Zanjan was not an isolated case. Unpaid laborers who lost their jobs due to the closing down of railway and road construction sites in the

As these incidents suggest, "friendly" groups chose to be "friendly" because of the concrete benefits they received. Once those benefits disappeared, they could easily turn "unfriendly" from the state's perspective, indicating that local inhabitants actively and pragmatically calculated best options available when the presence of the central state and foreign contractors had become a reality of life in rural Iran.

Construction Workers

The scale of the construction projects in the early Pahlavi period was evident in the number of laborers various projects required. About 6,000 construction laborers worked on railway construction in Khuzestan alone as of March 1931.[279] At the peak of construction, according to one estimate, about 40,000 to 50,000 men were employed for the project, with ninety percent of them recruited locally.[280] Because so many laborers worked on construction sites, especially in Mazandaran and Khuzestan, the payment of wages for laborers caused a constant shortage of silver currency in all other provinces in the mid-1930s.[281]

Compared to the recruitment of guards through tribal khans, the methods by which unskilled Iranian laborers found employment on construction sites varied. On road

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occupied areas were often joined by army deserters to loot cities and villages after the abdication of Reza Shah in September, 1941. IOR/L/PS/12/3503, Intelligence Summary, No. 18-No. 20, 24 August-24 September, 1941.

279 IOR/L/PS/12/3400/PZ3627, Khuzistan Diary, No. 3, March 1931.

280 IOR/L/PS/12/3409, "Opening of the Trans-Iranian Railway," H. J. Seymour to Viscount Halifax, August 30, 1938.

281 IOR/L/PS/12/3472A, Annual Report, 1933, 90.

construction sites, when governors and local officials took charge of the projects, the tradition of corvée labor continued well into the 1930s.[282] Not surprisingly, laborers often tried to escape, slowing down the progress of construction projects.[283] Even when forced laborers were paid, as when residents of Mazandaran petitioned to the Majles, they received much lower wages than the market rate after local officials embezzled a portion of the wages.[284] Theoretically, Kampsax was responsible for supervising contractors' payments, but it is unclear whether corvée labor existed in reality on railroad construction sites. Even if corvée labor did not exist, delayed payment of salaries by Kampsax contractors occasionally caused laborers to take action. For instance, a number of laborers in Lorestan complained to the shah through the military government in 1934.[285]

Tribes such as the Papis were generally recruited as members of the tribe through tribal khans rather than finding employment as individual laborers.[286] If the recruitment

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282 For instance, the deputy-governor of Fuman extorted money and used forced labor in the construction of the Fuman-Masuleh road. IOR/L/PS/11/209/234/22, From A.Q. Davis, Vice Consulate of Rasht, to Percy Loraine, 13 April, 1926. For similar examples elsewhere, see IOR/L/PS/11/209/5349, A.L. Philip of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, 5 September 1928, "The Khuramabad Road," IOR/L/PS/12/3415/P6635, Annual Commercial Report of the Provinces of Sistan and the Qainat for the Year 1927-28, and IOR/L/PS/12/3405, from G.F. Squire, Consulate General for Khorasan, to Charge d'Affaires, Tehran, 31 May 1938.

283 IOR/L/PS/11/290/P2838, E2677/2661/34, R.F. Woodward to British Minister in Tehran, 4 May, 1928.

284 Nuri, *Asnad-e Mazandaran*, "Shekayat-e roʾaya-ye edareh-ye amlak-e ekhtesasi-ye kojur az edareh-ye toroq-e mazandaran (ML9/118/33/51), 364-5.

285 IOR/L/PS/12/3400, Khuzistan Diaries, May 1934.

286 As the 1943 British report "Tribes of Luristan" indicated, *tayefeh*s that were known for having "coolies" such as the Kord Alivands and Murad Alivands within the Baharvand tribe (*il*) had most of their adult members employed on construction sites, either temporarily or permanently. In contrast, others such as the Bayranvands had no

process of railway construction laborers worked similarly to road construction, construction companies would recruit laborers through provincial governors, who circulated information to tribal chiefs, who in turn supplied labor from their tribesmen.[287] Once recruited, unskilled tribal laborers were generally organized into a group of ten to thirty under a foreman, and most of them were between fourteen and twenty five years old.[288] Every morning, workers got up before sunrise, worked throughout the morning, had a long lunch break in an effort to avoid heat in summer, then resumed work with the sound of a camel bell and continued working until sunset.[289] Builders did not use machinery as widely as contemporary construction projects elsewhere. Tools such as pickaxes and chisels as well as wagons pulled by human did much of the work (Figure 4.4).[290]

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known coolies. Thus, as was the case with Papis, it appears that tribal construction workers were usually hired as groups through tribal khans rather than individuals throughout the Reza Shah period.

287 For instance, see IOR/L/PS/11/209/6410, R.C. Parr to Lord Cushendun, 1 November 1928, and "Burujird-Dizful Road."

288 Gruner. *Iran — "Persien,"* 20-21. Another source notes the presence of smaller children around ten years old and much older men with red dyed beards among construction laborers in Eastern Iran during World War Two. See COWI Archives, Kurt Olsen. "Storm Over Mellemøsten (Storm over the Middle East)", (Copenhagen: H. Hirschsprungs Forlag, n.d.), 76.

289 "Vinterbulletin fra Persien," COWI Archives, Kasse 106, November 1933, Ahvaz, 4. It appears that clocks were not used to measure working hours, as a Swiss engineer wrote, "working hours were what a modern man would estimate ten hours a day." See Gruner. *Iran — "Persien,"* 24. For a discussion of time and work-discipline in modern Iran, see Touraj Atabaki, "Time, Labour-Discipline and Modernization in Turkey and Iran: Some Comparative Remarks," Touraj Atabaki ed. *The State and the Subaltern: Modernization, Society and the State in Turkey and Iran* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 1-16.

290 Buhelt, "Mit Persiske Eventyr," 27.

(Figure 4.4) Iranian workers. Location unknown. COWI Archives, Album 57b, 104.

Except for tribal laborers who lived in the vicinities of construction sites, construction workers lived in railway camps that comprised of tents, sheep huts or temporary housing (Figure 4.5). Since many construction sites were in remote areas, food and water for workers were transported on trucks and animal transport such as camels and donkeys via service roads that they constructed just prior to building the railway.[291] Workers complained about the overpriced water and bread considering their dreadful

291 COWI Archives, Kasse 102, Jernbaner, Iran, Club Irano Scandinave, 21.

quality.[292] When the workers' camp was not close, workers also had to be transported daily, which caused a traffic jam on service roads.[293]

(Figure 4.5) A construction site and workers' camp near Keshvar, Lorestan. COWI Archives, Album F57b, 125.

Laborers did not necessarily come from the immediate vicinity. They could be collectively recruited from neighboring provinces, too, as laborers from Semnan were found on construction sites in Mazandaran.[294] Also, they did not always have to work on a particular construction site. They could potentially take advantage of different

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292 Nuri, *Asnad-e Mazandaran*, "Taqaza-ye ʿamalejat-e damghani," 275.

293 COWI Archives, Svend Buhelt "Mit Persiske Eventyr (My Persian Adventure)," 55.

294 Nuri, *Asnad-e Mazandaran*, "Taqaza-ye ʿamalejat-e damghani baraye pardakht-e hoquq-e sakht-e rah ahan (MA9/118/33/84)," 274-5.

construction projects managed by different contractors. For instance, when American engineers of the German-American railway syndicate initially commenced construction between Ahvaz and Dezful in Khuzestan in late 1927, the standard daily wage of road construction labor was two qerans per day.[295] Following "some discussions as to their daily wage," the American manager, who may have lacked familiarity with the average wage as a newcomer or desperately needed more laborers, offered three qerans per day. The immediate consequence was the spontaneous mass exodus of road construction laborers employed nearby under the supervision of a Russian engineer to railway construction sites.[296] Laborers could benefit more from the high demand for labor at the peak of construction. The American Ulen Company had to increase the daily wage from three to four qerans in 1929 in order to attract more Arab laborers in Khuzestan, where agricultural harvesting had previously been prioritized over construction labor.[297]

As illustrated by these examples, railway construction workers were paid as individuals, even tribal laborers who were recruited collectively. The practice of the employer paying an annual sum to tribal khans rather than to individual laborers from tribal groups was in decline by the 1920s but had not disappeared. Bakhtiyari guards who

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295 The wage was the same in southeastern Iran. See IOR/L/PS/10/794/E1/1/34, "Parsi Transport Company in Southeast Persia," 30 May, 1923. Qeran was a currency used in Iran prior to its replacement with Rial in 1932. It was worth 20 shahi and 0.1 toman.

296 IOR/L/PS/10/794/P56/E5438/201/34, from R.H. Clive to Austen Chamberlain, 26 November, 1927. Mass exodus is a common form of collective action among coolies to protest against working conditions without making specific demands. Marcel van der Linden, "The Promise and Challenges of Global Labor History," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 82 (2012): 71.

297 IOR/L/PS/11/290/P4431, Ahvaz Diary, No. 4, April 1929.

were hired to protect properties of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company had started to get paid directly from the head guards, not from the khans, by 1909.[298] In contrast, Baluchi tribal khans who supplied the British with guards to protect infrastructure received payment as late as 1925.[299] In the case of tribal laborers on the southern railway route, albeit more so in Khuzestan than Lorestan, prior experience with the APOC and road construction projects from the 1900s may have familiarized tribal populations with receiving salary individually by the time railway construction started in the late 1920s.

Paying salary directly from the employer to individual laborers had the effect of weakening the influence of tribal khans. Furthermore, it worked as an incentive for laborers to come back to construction sites everyday rather than coming only when they did not have to harvest crops or tend livestock. Similar to the APOC at the beginning of its existence, the Trans-Iranian Railway project had difficulties with retaining the recruited tribal laborers for the entire year, or even for a short period of time such as one week or two. To prevent desertion of work and ensure continuity of the workforce, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company made the payment on a fortnightly basis. Railway construction sites applied the same method of payment.[300]

Nevertheless, the system was open to manipulation. For instance, many laborers sold the tickets that they received in exchange for daily labor on construction sites on the

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298 Touraj Atabaki, "From ʿAmaleh (Labor) to Kargar (Worker): Recruitment, Work Discipline and Making of the Working Class in the Persian/Iranian Oil Industry," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 84 (2013): 164.

299 IOR/L/PS/10/787, Consul for Sistan to Percey Loraine, on Nov 16, 1925.

300 Atabaki, "From ʿAmaleh (Labor) to Kargar (Worker)," 166-8, and Gruner, *Iran — "Persien,"* 20.

black market. In order to receive salary in cash, laborers had to present the tickets on specified payment days. Since many tribal laborers retained their land or livestock, however, it was sometimes difficult to be present at the construction site on payment days. Therefore, laborers sold them to vendors to reap the benefit of their labor. The long payday list that section managers had in comparison with the number of laborers who actually showed up indicated the prevalence of this practice, which in turn made it necessary for the Ministry of Roads to examine the tickets and ticketholders more closely at the time of payment.[301]

As exemplified by the use of pink slips, construction laborers were not passively exposed to techniques of control introduced by mostly European contractors under the supervision of Kampsax. Despite Kampsax engieneers' vision to "de-Orientalize" Iran and bring "Westernization" to Iran through the Trans-Iranian Railway,[302] laborers were not simply molded into Kampsax's vision of laborers. For instance, when railway hospitals distributed free quinine to workers in Mazandaran for malaria prevention, Iranian laborers sold it on the black market for additional income, making the medicine readily available in Tehran.[303] Thus, Iranian laborers attempted to ameliorate their lives by adapting to the unfamiliar practices of new players in their locales, such as contractors for railway construction and hospitals' medical staff. This is not to say that laborers

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301 Nuri, *Asnad-e Mazandaran*, "Javabiyeh-ye vezarat-e toroq dar mowred-e pardakht-e hoquq-e ʿamalejat (ML9/118/33/57)," 224.
302 Kauffeldt, *Danes, Orientalism, and the Modern Middle East*, 168 and 171.
303 COWI Archives, KX14, "Ingeniøren og Eventyret (Consortium Kampsax)," Indberetning nr., 41-2.

rejected "foreign" practices. As we will see in the next section, the presence of foreign workers had a major impact on the demands that Iranian workers formulated.

Expressions of Grievances among Laborers

As mentioned earlier, local populations such as Lors and Arabs were not the only workers present on construction sites. The workforce had varying compositions depending on the location. For instance, in the flat section immediately south of Qom, most of the 500 workers were Iranian because there existed little need for skilled stonecutters and masons.[304]

In contrast, more challenging areas such as the mountainous areas of Mazandaran and Lorestan had a diverse group of engineers and workers who lived and worked side by side with locally employed unskilled laborers. Semiskilled diggers and masons were Azaris from the province of Azarbaijan, where they might have gained experience partly due to the existence of the Russian-built Jolfa-Tabriz railway and its extension to Sharafkhaneh by Lake Orumiyeh.[305] Armenians worked as chauffeurs and low-level administrators. Furthermore, southern Europe exported thousands of skilled workers who needed employment during the Great Depression. The Greeks were stonecutters, the Slovaks were tunnel workers, and a great number of Italians were everywhere as

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304 Ibid., 54.

305 Just like the British constructed railways in Iranian frontiers such as Dozdab (present-day Zahedan) in the southeast and Bushehr-Borazjan in the south during World War One, Russians completed a railway from its borders to the province of Azarbaijan. IOR/L/PS/18/193, Memorandum Regarding the Policy of His Majesty's Government towards Persia at the Peace Conference, 17-18.

stonecutters, masons, engineers, and supervisors of the workforce. The Scandinavians, Austrians, Hungarians, Belgians, and Swiss worked in managerial positions or as engineers and construction supervisors.

In addition, Europeans moved to Iran to open new restaurants, bars, and hotels that catered to Europeans who were involved in railway and highway construction.[306] Thus, construction projects of the Reza Shah period caused a massive influx of foreign workers and engineers to Iran. Importantly, unlike the presence of foreigners in the oil industry who were concentrated in Khuzestan, Europeans who worked in the construction sector were scattered along railway and highway routes in the western half of Iran, creating multiple sites of interactions between Iranians and foreign workers.

These diverse groups of workers were treated differently depending on their nationality and credentials. In terms of salary, while unskilled laborers made six to nine rials per day even in the late 1930s, and skilled Iranians made fifteen to thirty rials, European workers made sixty to seventy-five rials per day. The manager of each of the twenty lots along the railway route made 7,000 rials per month, while managers of smaller sections made two to three thousand rials. They also enjoyed such perquisites as free furnished housing and transport service that lower-level employees did not enjoy.[307] Engineers and other professionals also lived separately from regular workers in workers' camps, spatially formalizing the hierarchy. They either rented buildings in nearby urban

306 Buhelt, "Mit Persiske Eventyr," p. 22-23, and Gruner. *Iran — "Persien,"* 21-22.
307 Ibid., 20-23.

centers or built tents surrounded by interpreters, chefs, servants, and livestock. Local laborers lived in a quarter closer to the entrance of the camps along with guards.[308]

While employment in the construction sector brought a stable income to local inhabitants-turned-unskilled laborers along the routes of railways, they acutely felt the preferential treatment that skilled workers from outside their community received. Their resentment against the perceived dominance of outsiders can be seen in emergency situations. When earthquakes repeatedly occurred in Mazandaran in early 1935, a tunnel and stone quarry collapsed and trapped Azari workers between logs and rocks. When local laborers were asked to rescue them, the laborers declined, saying that rescuing Turks was not their responsibility.[309] Also, during ʿAshura of the same year, the ulama of ʿAbbasabad attributed frequent earthquakes to a divine wrath toward Europeans, who were drilling the mountains with no avail. When a Kampsax engineer was caught taking photos of ʿAshura processions in this volatile situation, he was forced to hide in a railway station temporarily, as local laborers attacked him as the disrupter of local life.[310]

Furthermore, through petitions they submitted to the Majles, Iranian workers expressed their dissatisfaction with the perceived preferential treatment that foreigners, especially Europeans, received. For instance, at the beginning of 1931, Mohammad Zaki Valad-e Ahmad filed a petition to the Majles about his miserable condition. After working for the German-American railway syndicate for two and a half years, he lost his

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308 COWI Archives, Kasse 106 ,"Vinterbulletin fra Persien," 3.
309 COWI Archives, Buhelt, "Mit Persiske Eventyr," 24.
310 COWI Archives, Kasse 106, Boisen, "Banen Skal Bygges Paa Seks Aar," 69-70.

leg during work, stayed in the hospital for half a year, after which he received a prosthetic leg. After this, however, his salary was reduced from 160 qerans a month to eighty, and after another half a year, the eighty-qeran salary was discontinued. Claiming that his house would be destroyed in three days if he could not secure money to give back to the debtor, he desperately wrote, "when a German lost an arm, they (the syndicate) would give him seven hundred tomans (7,000 qerans) and even give him a job. But however much I, a guardian of four people, three sisters and one mother, petition to the syndicate, they do not reply."[311]

Another construction worker who lost his arm to a dynamite accident in a tunnel on a Mazandarani construction site expressed a similar grievance against the injustice Iranians had to suffer. He deplored, "Is it fair in an era of a just king…that all foreigners and the like benefit from the best justice available and enjoy the homage while a dedicated man of the Iranian race (*Iraninezhad*) who lost his arm for his homeland (*vatan*) has been thrown into despair…"[312]

Not only did unskilled laborers hold grudges against European workers, relatively skilled Iranians expressed grievances against different treatments they received. A 1934 letter written by an employee of a military pharmacy in Sari criticized Kampsax for giving jobs to Europeans and not to the patriotic, pure Iranians (*Iraniyan-e paknezhad-e*

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311 ML 8/10/21/1/10.

312 ML10/134/7/1/20. Praising the ruler as just while criticizing the system operated by intermediaries of the central state was a common feature of petitioning because it affirmed the petitioners' loyalty to the ruler while sharpening their criticism of the corruption of intermediaries. For an example of peasants in Mehmet Ali's Egypt, see Chalcraft, "Engaging the State," 306-310.

vatanparast), creating a situation in which "every European porter spends a large amount of money for various excuses while poor Iranians remain unemployed."[313] To his chagrin, even educated Iranians did not get jobs because Kampsax considered Iranian youths only as capable as "savages in Africa" and thus permitted them only manual labor. According to the petitioner, this was the case in both technical and managerial positions, even though Persian speakers would have advantages in managerial jobs due to their ability to communicate with the laborers.[314] Europeans would certainly disagree with the level of competency among educated Iranians, but the perception among Iranians who received education and training in Europe was that of unfairness.[315] Thus, just like unskilled laborers, skilled Iranians formulated their demands based on what European employees received. Witnessing the generous compensations to which Europeans were contractually entitled emboldened Iranian demands for justice.

As Mohammad Zaki's petition indicated, there was only a limited institutional mechanism to provide Iranian laborers and their families with adequate compensation in cases of injuries and deaths. In 1931, the cabinet approved the first social security fund in

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313 Nuri, *Asnad-e Mazandaran*, "Shekvaiyeh az ʿadam-e kargiri-ye iraniyan tavassot-e sherkat-e kampsaks (MA9/118/33/45)," 268.

314 Ibid., 269.

315 Complaints among Kampsax and other European engineers about Iranian engineers were very common. For instance, one Norwegian complained, "[t]he Persian 'engineers' do six months engineering course [sic] at some university in Europe and then return 'fully qualified.'" See IOR/L/PS/12/3404/PZ5610, E4632/302/34, A report by V.A.L. Mallet, 28 September, 1935. For similar complaints, IOR/L/PS/12/3409/PZ3845/31, Memorandum by E.R. Lingeman, pp. 2-3, and IOR/L/PS/12/3409/PZ6548/31, Lacy Baggallay to Lord Marquess, 21 September 1931.

Iran.[316] Workers on railway and road construction sites got two percent of their wages deducted to fund the program. According to Willem Floor's study of labor in Iran, the fund covered the following services:

1. Medical help to those fallen ill or wounded on the job. This included medicine, food, and medical services in the larger centers;

2. In case of illness or accident as a result of employment the workers would be paid 50 per cent of their daily wage for a maximum of two years;

3. Those permanently disabled would get a lump sum. In case of total disability, the sum would be equal to the contributions paid during the last two years with a maximum of 2,000 *tumans*. In case of partial disability, the indemnification would vary between 50 per cent and two and a half per cent of the contributions paid during the last two years depending on the kind of invalidity;

316 Willem Floor. *Labor and Industry in Iran, 1850-1941* (Washington DC: Mage Publishers, 2009), 93 and Cyrus Schayegh, "The Development of Social Insurance in Iran: Technical-Financial Conditions and Political Rationales, 1941-1960," *Iranian Studies* 39, no. 4 (2006): 545.

4. Payment of a lump sum to the heirs, and to those for whom the deceased was responsible. The sum to be equal to the payments made during the last two years.[317]

Despite the promises, the new regulations often failed to benefit construction workers. Petitions submitted by workers to the Majles indicate a lack of a standardized procedure. Submitting an application for compensation required a visit to the Ministry of Roads in Tehran even when the petitioner was disabled. The initial application was followed by a lengthy series of correspondence with multiple state institutions, which may or may not reply at all.[318] More often, they simply had to face the consequences of work-related health problems on their own. In more fortunate cases, they could receive payment for an extended period of time like Mohammad Zaki. Thus, although Kampsax

317 Floor, *Labor and Industry in Iran, 1850-1941*, 94.

318 One of the common petitions to the Majles with regard to compensations for injuries and deaths complained about the non-responsiveness of various branches of the government such as the Ministry of Roads and municipal governments. For other petitions from disabled laborers and family members of deceased laborers, see Nuri, *Asnad-e Mazandaran*, "Taqaza-ye pardakht-e khesarat az taraf-e yeki az kargaran-e rah ahan beh dalil-e tasadof (ML9/118/33/69)," 270, "Taqaza-ye yeki az kargaran-e rah ahan baraye pardakht-e gheramat-e hadeseh az dast dadan-e pahayesh (ML9/118/33/75)," 273, "Taqaza-ye barqarari-ye moqarrari baraye yeki az jan bakhtegan-e sakht-e rah ahan (ML10/186/34/46)," 278, and ML11/19/39/1/3.

established the sanitation service and constructed hospitals along the railway routes,[319] laborers simply could not spare one hundred qerans for medical treatment when their daily wage was only two qerans, according to the complaints of laborers in the north line.[320]

Collecting compensation turned out to be difficult for professionals, too, as the case of an Iranian railway engineer indicates. ʿAbbas Qoli ʿAtapur was a railway engineer who worked for the German-American railway syndicate for four years after his education in Europe. In 1932, during his survey trip in Mazandaran, he fell from a cliff and became disabled. Despite the contractual obligation to compensate, even four months after the accident, the Railway Administration (*edareh-ye rah ahan*) did not make an offer for compensation or a less mobile job ʿAtapur could perform, leading to the impoverishment of the family that had lost its only breadwinner.[321] The answer ʿAtapur received five months after the accident from the Railway Administration stated that the case was still under investigation.[322] Though it is unclear what happened to ʿAtapur's case afterwards, it is quite possible that his case was lost in the complex web of state bureaucracy, the fate of many similar petitions in the early Pahlavi era.

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319 COWI Archives, KX 14,"Ingeniøren og Eventyret," Indberetning nr., p. 46. Some of these dispensaries were converted into rest houses when the construction was over. See COWI Archives, Kasse 106, Boisen, "Banen Skal Bygges Paa Seks Aar," 150.

320 Nuri, *Asnad-e Mazandaran*, "Shekvaiyeh az nabesamani-ye marizkhaneh-ye rah ahan (ML9/117/33/18)," 263-4.

321 Nuri, *Asnad-e Mazandaran*, "Taqaza-ye ʿabbas qoli ʿatapur baraye barqarari-ye moqarari-ye havades va shoghl-e monaseb (ML8/33/32/100)," 262.

322 Ibid., "Javabiyeh-ye edareh-ye rah ahan-e shomal beh darkhast-e 'abbas qoli 'atapur (ML8/33/32/100)," 263.

Iranian laborers struggled to survive these trying conditions in a number of ways. Employing the same tactics as European workers, or possibly in tandem with the Europeans, Iranians sometimes protested on construction sites to have their grievances heard (Figure 4.6), necessitating the dispatch of soldiers.[323] They also complained to the Kampsax's claims department, which handled disputes not only between workers and contractors but also between subcontractors and contractors.[324] Moreover, like landowners, they petitioned to various government authorities such as the Majles, the Ministry of Roads, and municipal governments to take concrete actions to alleviate their problems.[325] They even petitioned directly to the shah himself.[326] During the Allied

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323 IOR/L/PS/12/3400/PZ8023, Khuzestan Diary, October 1931. Likewise, immediately after the 1929 strike by oil workers in Abadan, three hundred construction workers hired by the Ulen Company also demanded higher wages. Upon receiving advice from the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, the Ulen Company requested the governor-general of Ahvaz to arrest ringleaders of the strike. Touraj Atabaki, "Missing Labour in the Metanarratives of Practicing Modernity in Iran: Labour Agency in Refashioning the Discourse of Social Development," in David Mayer and Jürgen eds., *Interventions: The Impact of Labour Movements on Social and Cultural Development* (Wien: International Conference of Labour and Social History—ITH, Akademische Verlagsanstalt, 2013), 186.

324 COWI Archives, Olsen. "Storm Over Mellemøsten," 57. Although Olsen states that Kampsax made sure that contractors paid workers regularly and deducted workers' salaries from the contractors' accounts if they did not, the effectiveness of this measure is questionable given the number of workers' complaints regarding non-payment. I was unable to find any records left by the claims department at COWI Archives.

325 Nuri, *Asnad-e Mazandaran*, "Taqaza-ye maldaran va ʿamalejat-e khatt-e kenar-e deh now baraye pardakht-e hoquq (ML9/118/33/57)," 223, "Taqaza-ye pardakht-e hoquq-e ʿamalegi dar jaddeh-ye shahi (ML10/186/34/16)," 225, and "Taqaza-ye pardakht-e hoquq-e ʿaqabmandeh-ye motasaddi-ye jaddeh-ye alasht (ML8/32/32/37)," 255-6.

326 Nuri, Asnad-e Mazandaran, "Shekvaiyeh-ye mobasher-e rah ahan az ekhrajesh tavassot-e kampsaks (MA9/118/33/67)," 271-2, IOR/L/PS/12/3400/PZ850, Khuzestan Diary, 16 August to 20 October, No. 8, 1933, IOR/L/PS/3400/PZ4613, Khuzestan Diary, May 1934.

occupation, in desperation, laborers handed a petition letter to the manager of Kampsax who was passing their area, asking him to provide them at least bread, if not salary.[327]

(Figure 4.6) A protest in the workers' camp near Keshvar, Lorestan. COWI Archives, Album F57b, p. 125. Although the nationalities of the protestors are unclear, some of them seem to be wearing the Pahlavi hat, which was required for Iranian men between 1926 and 1935. Others seem to be wearing a fedora or a flat cap, a common headwear among Turks after the abolition of fez by Mustafa Kemal in 1925.

Conclusion

Newly constructed railways touched heterogeneous local communities unevenly. This chapter has discussed primarily Lorestan, Khuzestan, Mazandaran, and Tehran to provide

327 COWI Archives, Olsen. "Storm Over Mellemøsten", 68.

snapshots of both settled and nomadic rural communities in the process of transformations brought about by the development of transportation infrastructure. While the experiences of Mazandarani construction laborers, Tehrani landowners, and Lor and Arab tribes differed significantly, what tied them together was the increasing level of engagement with various state- and non-state entities such as the Majles, ministries, the *ʿadliyeh* court, municipal governments, foreign workers, and contractors under Kampsax supervision. Through petitioning to various branches of the government, protesting on construction sites, manipulating practices of new players in rural Iran, and even kidnapping, inhabitants along the routes operated from within evolving power relations in the daily practices of rural Iran. Even such confrontational actions as kidnapping and protests were not simple expressions of resistance to the state intrusion into their lives. Rather, they were embedded in the continuous practice of resituating themselves in the evolving relationships among various branches of the state, local inhabitants, and contractors. True, local inhabitants failed to acquire what they hoped for more often than not. Yet, their politics of engagement may have normalized the existence of state- and non-state institutions in their minds. Despite the lack of a standardized procedure, petitioning various branches of the state became increasingly routinized for local inhabitants, who had to file petitions repeatedly to navigate through the emerging bureaucracy. Likewise, the daily presence of foreign workers shaped the demands that Iranians expressed, as Iranian workers petitioned using the language of patriotism versus favoritism toward foreigners. As these examples indicate, local inhabitants along railways and roads developed an intimate understanding of the expanding role of the state, the new

practices of foreign contractors and workers, and their rights as Iranians and limitations to those rights by engaging constantly with various political and economic entities of rural Iran in their daily lives.

Chapter 5: Mobilizing Railway Workers

Introduction

"What interested me most while working for this company (the Iranian State Railway) was our contribution during World War Two in advancing the Allies' cause and gaining the title 'the victory bridge (*pol-e piruzi*).'"[328] This was the statement of Shahbaz Javadi, a fifty-year-old railway repair factory worker, referring to the use of the Trans-Iranian Railway by the Allies during the occupation from 1941 to 1945. Less than two decades before, Javadi, who came from a little village in Semnan Province, worked as a petty vendor in and around Mashhad yet continued to look for an opportunity in technical fields. His life changed dramatically when railway construction started in the wilderness by the Caspian Sea in 1928. The wilderness became the northern terminus called Bandar-e Shah during a decade of his life as a railway construction worker in the north. He was eventually transferred to the repair factory in Tehran, joining the cadre of semi-skilled workers of the railway industry.

Javadi was only one of the thousands of workers the course of whose lives changed drastically as a result of their employment in the nascent railway industry. During the second quarter of the twentieth century, in addition to the Lor laborers who were discussed in Chapter Four, sedentarized Iranians in urban centers and frontier provinces also joined the workforce en masse. By mid-twentieth century, the construction

328 "Kargaran-e rah ahan ra beshenasid (Shahbaz Javadi)," *Mardan-e Ruz*, February 27, 1946.

and operation of the Trans-Iranian Railway created the largest industrial workforce in Iran outside the oil industry. In addition to skilled and unskilled construction workers and a small number of engineers, a large number of workers had to be employed for operation and maintenance by the Railway Organization (*bongah-e rah ahan*), which was established in 1935 as a state institution to manage Iran's railways under The Ministry of Roads. By early 1945, thanks to the increased need to transport goods and personnel during World War II, the Railway Organization maintained 36,000 employees, making the railway industry the largest state-owned industry in Iran.[329] Even after a massive downsizing following the end of the Allied occupation and the subsequent decrease in demand, the organization retained approximately 24,000 employees.[330] Thus, while oil workers were concentrated in the southwestern province of Khuzestan, the railway industry fostered the growth of a workforce in strategically important provinces all along the expanding railway network, including Azarbaijan, Mazandaran, Lorestan, and Khuzestan.

While the previous chapter included discussions of construction laborers in rural Iran, this chapter focuses more on workers who emerged after the opening of sections of the Trans-Iranian Railway in the early 1930a, including workers at repair factories, depots, and stations. As I will discuss in the next section, studies of the oil industry, especially Touraj Atabaki's scholarship, provide important parallels and connections to

329 Malakuti, *Rah Ahan-e Iran*, 66.
330 Ibid, 67.

the formation of the railway workforce.[331] Furthermore, rather than focusing on the formation of workers through overt political actions such as protests and strikes alone, this chapter is informed by scholarship on labor that considers the discursive construction of the "working class" by taking into consideration workers' social settings.[332]

Through discussions of the backgrounds of railway workers, their socialization process, and their quest for improving living and working conditions, it examines how the large railway workforce came into being as a group that shared specific experiences and goals by the end of the 1940s. The arguments of this chapter are twofold. First, contrary to existing scholarship's emphasis on the role of the Pahlavi state in creating the first generation of railway workers, I argue that early railway workers were often mobile populations who had gained industrial experience prior to the Trans-Iranian Railway project. Therefore, rather than discussing labor formation in the Iranian railway industry within a national framework, we need to take into consideration transnational flows of labor that were not necessarily contingent on the policies of the Pahlavi state. Second, railway workers' demands developed concomitantly with the Railway Organization's increasingly comprehensive strategies to regulate workers' lives. In other words, the Railway Organization did not simply impose disciplinary measures on its workers. Rather, the disciplinary measures were shaped in conjunction with various expressions of discontent among railway workers.

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331 For a general study of labor in Iran prior to the Allied occupation, see Floor, *Labor & Industry in Iran*.

332 For instance, Atabaki, "From ʿAmaleh (Labor) to Kargar (Worker)."

Origins of Railway Workers

The few accounts of the Trans-Iranian Railway published in Persian do not discuss the employees of the Railway Organization in detail. With regard to upper-echelon employees such as Iranian railway engineers, these accounts start with the dispatching of students to Europe at the start of the Reza Shah period.[333] In terms of the birth of rank-and-file railway workers, they begin with the establishment of various technical schools to train railway workers, such as the Railway Technical School (*honarestan-e rah ahan*) in 1936.[334] Although these discussions encapsulate the Pahlavi state's efforts to gradually indigenize the workforce, they omit other stories that do not fit the narrative of the Trans-Iranian Railway as a Pahlavi state project to build the nation. In contrast to these approaches, this section resituates Iran in the broader region of Russia, the Caucasus, Anatolia, India, and Iraq, and considers the mobility of non-state actors.

Employees of the Railway Organization included not only managers and engineers but also workers of various skill levels who came from extremely diverse backgrounds. This section discusses the origins of the diverse employees, especially rank-and-file workers, in order to elucidate the increased geographical and socioeconomic mobility of both Iranians and non-Iranians fostered by the railway system. As this section demonstrates, the movement of workers occurred provincially, nationally,

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333 For instance, see Mahbubi-Ardakani, *Tarikh-e Moʿassesat*, p. 381 and Malakuti, *Rah Ahan-e Iran*, 195.

334 Mahbubi-Ardakani, *Tarikh-e Moʿassesat*, pp. 383-5 and Malakuti, *Rah Ahan-e Iran*, 202-8.

and transnationally. Furthermore, the movement was not limited to Iran sending students to Europe and European engineers with expertise coming to Iran. The movement of labor between Iran and its surrounding countries played an important part in forming the first generation of Iranian railway workers.

The significance of Iran's surrounding countries applies even to high-echelon employees of the Railway Organization. Although many of the first generation of Iranian high-level managers and engineers received training in Europe, others gained work experience in Russia and the Ottoman Empire. For instance, Parviz Bahman, the head of the Railway Organization between 1935 and 1936, was born in Tabriz in 1874 as the great grandson of Abbas Mirza. After spending his adolescent years in Russia, he proceeded to the Engineering College of St. Petersburg. Upon completing his education, he worked on railway construction in Russia and the Ottoman Empire until its dissolution, before returning to Iran in 1924.[335] As this case indicates, due to the absence of opportunities within Iran, the small cadre of the first generation of Iranian technocratic leaders received training and gained experience abroad, especially in neighboring Russia and Anatolia rather than Europe and the United States, where students from the early Pahlavi era were later dispatched.

When the Majles ratified the Railway Act in 1927, the number of Iranian professionals who were qualified to run the Iranian Railway Organization was utterly

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335 See "Ro'asa-ye sabeq-e rah ahan ra beshenasid," *Mardan-e Ruz*, April 24, 1946. For a similar biography of a younger Tabrizi gaining higher education in Istanbul (and Germany) in the 1910s, see "Karmandan-e rah ahan ra beshenasid (mohandes-e taherzadeh behzad)," *Mardan-e Ruz*, February 27, 1946.

inadequate. Thus, throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the Iranian government had no choice but to employ a number of Europeans and Americans as surveyors, engineers, and clerical staff.[336] To solve this problem, the Pahlavi state attempted to train a new generation of Iranian civil engineers, particularly railway engineers, by sending students abroad.[337] Like earlier generations, the new generation mostly came from prominent aristocratic and clerical families. Unlike the older generation, after graduating from such schools as the Alborz School and Dar al-Fonun, they received higher education and training in Europe and the United States, including the Department of Transportation in Pennsylvania.[338] By the late 1940s, and to the chagrin of European and American engineers who considered the young Iranians too inexperienced and lacking technical

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336 The composition of European and American employees changed during the 1920s and 1930s. When the German-American railway syndicate managed the construction from 1927, eighty-two Germans and thirty-seven Americans were employed as professionals under the railway syndicate. After 1933, when Kampsax, the Danish consortium, took over the supervision of the construction, Scandinavians, as well as Swiss and Germans, came to dominate the positions. IOR/L/PS/12/3455, "Foreigners employed in Persian government service, either directly under contract with the Majlis, or indirectly with the National Bank or under the Railway Syndicate," from R. H. Clive to Arthur Henderson, October 3, 1929. For a German entrepreneur's involvement that influenced the Iranian government's decision to hire German railway experts, see Rashid Armin Khatib-Shahidi. *German Foreign Policy towards Iran before World War II: Political Relations, Economic Influence and the National Bank of Persia* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 47-50.

337 For instance, between 1929 and 1932, the Ministry of Roads sent sixty-nine students to the West to study railway engineering. See David Menashri, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 125.

338 "Karmandan-e rah ahan ra beshenasid (Ibrahim Ruhi)," *Mardan-e Ruz*, January 23, 1946, "Karmandan-e rah ahan ra beshenasid (Hosayn Hasheminezhad)," *Mardan-e Ruz*, February 6, 1946, "Karmandan-e rah ahan ra beshenasid (doktor Taba)," *Mardan-e Ruz*, February 20, 1946, "Karmandan-e rah ahan ra beshenasid (Khosrow Hedayat)," *Mardan-e Ruz*, March 20, 1946.

knowledge, managerial positions of the Iranian Railway Organization were dominated by young Iranian technocrats in their thirties and forties.

As mentioned in Chapter Four, thousands of skilled foreign workers from various parts of Europe comprised a large percentage among workers on construction sites. As was the case with the oil industry, the Pahlavi state did not conceal its desire to indigenize the workforce.[339] The Iranian government pressured foreign construction companies. For instance, the 1929 notification issued to the American Ulen Company read, "Only Persian subjects are eligible for jobs and contracts in the Railway. Should Persians not be available to fill up technical appointments then foreigners will be engaged but not without special permission first being obtained from the Governor-General (of Khuzestan)."[340]

While pressuring foreign companies, the Pahlavi state attempted to indigenize low and middle echelon employees, including drivers and various types of mechanics and technicians. From the early 1930s, the central state began training children in recently suppressed tribal areas such as Turkoman children in Bandar Shah.[341] The number of students in these technical schools was modest at the beginning. There were only seventy

339 For the tensions between the Danish consortium's lack of interest in indigenizing the workforce and the Pahlavi state's desire to Iranize the operations from a business history perspective, see Andersen, "Building for the Shah."

340 IOR/L/PS/11/290. Consul for Khuzistan, Ahwaz Diary, No. 10, October 1929.

341 Rudi Matthee, "Transforming Dangerous Nomads into Useful Artisans, Technicians, Agriculturalists," in Stephanie Cronin ed., *The Making of Modern Iran: State and Society under Reza Shah, 1921-1941* (London: Routeledge, 2003), 132.

students in Bandar Shah, thirty-one in Tehran, and forty seven in Khorramabad.[342] A limited number of students also received training in Europe in such areas as driving. They were, however, at least in the eyes of European and American engineers, utterly incompetent, particularly given the need to operate the railway system in the difficult mountainous terrains that the Trans-Iranian Railway penetrated compared to the comparatively flat terrains of some European railway systems.[343]

Among foreign workers, Indians comprised a significant force. India had a history of exporting its abundant labor force to the Persian Gulf region.[344] For instance, Indian railway workers played a significant role in the functioning, maintenance, and administration of railways in Iraq until the 1920s due to the lack of trained Iraqi staff.[345] Throughout the 1920s during the mandate period, however, Iraq reduced its reliance on Indian workers, eliminating contracts with both skilled and unskilled Indian workers.[346] Although no evidence exists to connect Indian labor migration directly from Iraq to Iran,

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342 Ibid.

343 As was the case with the oil industry, European engineers frequently complained about the perceived incompetence of Iranian "boys." For instance, see IOR/L/PS/12/3409. From Lacy Baggallay to Lord Marquess, September 21, 1931, "Persia: Progress of the North to South Trunk Railway," and IOR/L/PS/12/3404. From H. M. Knatchbull-Hugessen to Sir Samuel Hoare, October 24, 1935.

344 Stefan Tetzlaff, "The Turn of the Gulf Tide: Empire, Nationalism, and South Asian Labor Migration to Iraq, c. 1900-1935," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 79 (Spring 2011): 7-27.

345 Ibid., 15.

346 "The Iraq railways, for example, reduced their subordinate staff of skilled and unskilled labor, many of whom were Indians, from 26,120 to 304 between 1920 and 1931." Ibid., 21.

many Indians, along with some Iraqis, filled positions in the Iranian railway industry when their employment opportunities in Iraq were diminishing.

After the Trans-Iranian Railway construction started in the late 1920s, the demand for qualified industrial workers, as well as locomotive engineers, increased. Thus, due to the lack of qualified Iranian personnel, recruiting Indian and Iraqi drivers, clerks, mechanics, and other necessary personnel became an urgent need for Iran's nascent railway system.[347] The recruitment process occurred through the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (the Anglo-Persian Oil Company prior to 1935) and Iranian consulates in India. In theory, the AIOC was in charge of putting qualified drivers in touch with Iranian consulates in India. Then Iranian consulates were to work in liaison with the Ministry of Finance to get approval for the employment of foreign drivers. For the AIOC, which was under pressure from the Iranian government to progressively eliminate non-Iranian labor, Iran's necessity to recruit Indians for the railway system would strengthen their claim that the oil industry, like the railway industry, still needed a large number of foreign workers.[348]

By the late 1930s, however, Indian and Iraqi personnel, especially locomotive engineers, had become aware of the disadvantages of working for the Iranian Railway Organization. Consequently, "most of the Parsee drivers originally engaged" had left, unless they had arrears of payment due to them.[349] The 1937 recruitment attempts aimed

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347 IOR/L/PS/11/290. Consul for Khuzestan, Ahwaz Diary, No. 2, February 1929.
348 IOR/L/PJ/7/1904. From Nevile Butler to Lord Marquess, April 8, 1938.
349 Ibid.

at Iraqi locomotive engineers failed miserably with only one or two successful contracts.[350] The most pressing issue was the difficulty with remittance partially due to the control of currency exchange by the Iranian state and the overvaluing of the rial in the official exchange rate.[351] Furthermore, locomotive engineers faced constant blackmailing by repair-shop workers, who took advantage of the penalty system in order to supplement their meager income. In this system, the Railway Organization fined locomotive engineers when engines required repair due to the alleged fault of the engineer. It necessitated locomotive engineers to bribe repair-shop workers to avoid both authentic and inauthentic accusations made against them.[352] To alleviate the problems and attract Indian labor, one third of their 1,400-1,500 riyal of monthly salary was paid out in rupees, and Indians were to receive a free deck passage from India, free medical care, and allowances for rent.[353] As the comparatively favorable deal offered to Indian locomotive engineers suggests, the Iranian State Railway desperately needed to hire foreign drivers precisely because of the highly specialized skill required to drive a train.

In other mechanical and technical jobs such as carpentry, blacksmithing, welding, and so forth, however, the Iranian State Railway could employ a larger number of Iranian workers in addition to foreign workers, because skills and expertise required in these jobs were not as specific to the railway industry as driving was. Therefore, in these fields, it

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350 Ibid.

351 Encyclopedia Iranica. Commerce vii. In the Pahlavi and post-Pahlavi periods. http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/commerce-vii (retrieved on March 24, 2014)

352 IOR/L/PJ/7/1904. From Nevile Butler to Lord Marquess, April 8, 1938.

353 IOR/L/PJ/7/1904. From Nevile Butler to Lord Marquess, June 1938.

seems that the construction and operation of the Trans-Iranian Railway in its early days relied not only on foreign workers from Europe and Iran's neighbors but also on workers who had gained relevant work experience in other minor railway systems in Iran and the oil industry in Khuzestan.

A series of articles published in *Mardan-e Ruz*, the newspaper of the Railway Organization, gives a glimpse of the origins of these first railway workers who started to work in railway construction and operation in the late 1920s and the 1930s. The series was called "Know the Workers of the Railway (*Kargaran-e rah ahan ra beshenasid*)," printed in 1946, to introduce the lives and aspirations of ordinary railway workers to readers, most of whom were railway employees and their families (Table 5.1).[354] Twenty-six of these mini biographies from the series were available for this research. Admittedly, the number of samples is not sufficient to make a conclusive argument. Also, many of the employees featured in the series were in their forties and fifties and occupied supervising positions as foremen and masters (*ostad*) within particular units or divisions of railway-related factories. Thus, they were generally characterized as examples for less experienced, newer employees who joined the Railway Organization during the Allied

354 The name of the series was changed to "Payehha-ye pol-e piruzi ra beshenasid (Know the foundations of the Victory Bridge)" in September, 1946. Overall, the series was intended as a way to focus less on prominent white-collar employees (*karmandan*) of the Railway Organization and reach out to workers (*kargaran*) to make the newspaper truly relevant to all employees (*karkonan*). "Safheh-ye vizheh-ye kargaran," *Mardan-e Ruz*, January 2, 1946.

Occupation between 1941-45.[355] Yet, the samples still allow us to get a sense of common life trajectories among early railway workers who joined the nascent railway industry during the interwar period.

Name	Age	Education	Father's Occupa-tion	Birth-place	Division	Previous Work Experience
Mohammad T.	50	Primary education	Samovar maker	Tehran	Tehran Blacksmith	Samovar making
Mahmud S.	41	Teachers' College	Peasant	Tehran	Tehran Carpenter	Carpentry
Farj S.	31	Secondary education	Merchant	Tabriz	Tehran Technician	None
Akbar Q.	29	Secondary education	?	Tabriz	Tehran Welder	Factory jobs
Hosayn R.	30	Maktab	Shoe-maker	Kazerun	Tehran Repairman	Railway construction and the APOC
Shahbaz J.	50	Primary education (5 years)	Merchant	Korus, Semnan	Tehran Factory worker	Railway construction

(Table 5.1)

355 In this context, it is important to note that most interviewees mention their opinions regarding both work-related issues such as methods to improve the Railway Organization and personal issues such as marriage and family.

Ali and Aziz Q. (brothers)	46 and 47	?	?	Hamadan	Tehran Repairmen	Skoda, the APOC, bridge construction
Vahhab Z.	51	None	?	Khalkhal	Tehran Repairman	Mechanic job in Anzali, railway construction
Fath Ali B.*	approx. 50	None	?	Azar-baijan?	Tehran Wagon Repairman	Railway construction, the Tabriz-Jolfa Railway
Hosayn S.	52	None	Carpet weaver	Tabriz	Tehran Driving instructor	Peasantry, factory, the Tabriz-Jolfa Railway
Bala F.	52	None	Peasant	near Tabriz	Arak Repairman	Chauffeuring, the Turkish Railway, the Tabriz-Jolfa Railway
Eskandar R.	51	None	Merchant	Ardabil	North Welder	Mechanic job
Mohammad J.	40	None	Laborer	Sarab	North Boiler maker	Laborer in Iran and Russia

(Table 5.1)

Hassan S.	23	None	Baker	Sari	North Boiler maker	Railway since age 10
Badir F.	54	Primary education	Peasant	Ahvaz	South Factory worker	the APOC
Qasem N.	41	Primary education (4 years)	Civil servant	Ahvaz	South Mechanic	the APOC, railway construction
Ne'matollah M.	43	Primary education	APOC employee	Ahvaz	South Factory worker	the APOC
Ali D.	43	None	Peasant	Ahvaz	South Mechanic	the APOC, chauffeuring
Ali B.	46	Primary education	Peasant	Hendijan, Khuze-stan	South Factory worker	the APOC, railway construction
Ali Reza V.	43	Primary education (3 years)	Peasant	Chahar Mahal Bakhtiari	South Repairman	the APOC, railway construction
Rajabali M.	50	None	Peasant	Isfahan	South Factory worker	Peasantry, the APOC
Baqer S.	approx. 44	None	Baker	Isfahan	South Toolmaker	Artisanship, the APOC (mechanic)

(Table 5.1)

Reza A.*	48	?	?	Khuze-stan?	South Factory worker	the APOC, road building, employment in Poland
Baqer P.	88	None	Weapon maker	Dezful	South Factory worker	Weapon making, railway construction
Hosayn N.	28	Limited primary education	Carpenter	Dezful	South Repairman	Railway since age 9

(Table 5.1) Backgrounds of Iranian railway workers. Based on twenty-six articles "Kargaran-e rah ahan ra beshenasid," in *Mardan-e Ruz*, 1946. Divisions of the Railway Organization at the time included North, Tehran, Arak, and South. Workers in the North Division lived in Bandar Shah, and those in the South Division lived in Ahvaz. The birthplaces of two workers (indicated by asterisk) were not mentioned in the interviews, but considering that they started to work in Azarbaijan and Khuzestan respectively when they were around fifteen years old, I inferred that they were originally from these regions.

The articles were based either on oral interviews or written answers to questionnaires. Except for one driving instructor, all workers were mechanics and technicians with various specialties such as wagons, locomotives, and boilers. Unlike the organization's managers and engineers in the same period, most came from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Of the twenty workers who mentioned their fathers' occupations in the interviews, seven came from peasant families. Others came from various lower socioeconomic family backgrounds, including craftsmen, merchants, bakers, and laborers.

The lack of formal education and the experience of child labor were also indicative of their lower socioeconomic backgrounds compared to the managers and engineers of the Railway Organization. Only six of them had primary education, and three attended school after the establishment of the Pahlavi Dynasty in 1926. Some of them were illiterate, and one interviewee, Mohammad Jalilzadeh of a North-Division factory in Bandar Shah, mentioned that he often asked his children to read such newspapers as *Mardan-e Ruz*, the Railway Organization's newspaper, and *Rahbar*, a Tudeh newspaper.[356] Two others mentioned acquiring literacy through adult classes in Persian offered by the Railway Organization.[357]

The life stories and previous work experiences of these individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds illuminate how the first generation of railway workers emerged. For workers from northwestern Iran, the proximity to Turkey and Russia and the Russian-built Tabriz-Jolfa Railway provided opportunities for exposure to industrial work before the Trans-Iranian Railway project.[358] Among the twenty-six workers, eight of them came from Azari-speaking regions in the northwest such as Tabriz and Ardabil,

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356 "Kargaran-e rah ahan ra beshenasid," *Mardan-e Ruz*, July 10, 1946. His choice of newspapers was in stark contrast with the nationalist newspapers that the technical consultant of the Railway Organization listed as his favorites other than *Mardan-e Ruz*, such as *Mehr-e Iran*, *Khavar*, *Ettela'at*, *Ettelaʿat-e Haftegi*, and *Setareh*. "Karmandan-e rah ahan ra beshenasid," *Mardan-e Ruz*, February 27, 1946.

357 "Kargaran-e rah ahan ra beshenasid," *Mardan-e Ruz*, May 1, 1946, and May 8, 1946.

358 Just like the British constructed railways in Iranian frontiers such as Dozdab (present-day Zahedan) in the southeast and Bushehr-Borazjan in the south during World War One, Russians completed a railway from its borders to the province of Azarbaijan. IOR/L/PS/18/193, Memorandum Regarding the Policy of His Majesty's Government towards Persia at the Peace Conference, 17-18.

to which the first railway line did not even extend.[359] Most other workers came from areas in which the Trans-Iranian Railway operated, such as Khuzestan, Tehran, and Mazandaran. The overrepresentation of workers from Azari-speaking regions during the interwar period, despite the absence of railway lines there until the 1940s, suggests the existence of the industrial workforce in northwestern Iran prior to the Pahlavi period.[360] Five of them worked either for Russian-owned businesses in northern Iran or in the Caucasus or Turkey prior to joining the railway industry. For instance, Mohammad Jalilzadeh from Sarab, a small city between Tabriz and Ardabil, moved to Russia in 1916 when he was ten years old to escape wartime poverty in Iran and worked there as a laborer (*ʿamaleh*). After becoming a foreman (*sar ʿamaleh*) in Russia, he returned to Iran in 1934 to work on the Trans-Iranian Railway construction as a blacksmith.[361] Three of the interviewees from northwestern Iran worked for the Tabriz-Jolfa Railway, whose construction by Russia started in 1913 and finished in 1915, prior to moving to the Trans-Iranian Railway. For instance, after learning to become a chauffeur in Azarbaijan, Bala Fuladsaz went to the Ottoman Empire to work for the Anatolian Railway in 1911 before

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359 "Kargaran-e rah ahan ra beshenasid," *Mardan-e Ruz*, January 16, 1946, February 6, 1946, May 1, 1946, June 19, 1946, July 10, 1946, August 4, 1946, September 11, 1946, and September 18, 1946.

360 For temporary workers from northwestern Iran in the Russian Empire, see Touraj Atabaki, "Disgruntled Guests: Iranian Subaltern on the Margins of the Russian Empire," *International Review of Social History* 48 (2003): 401-426. Atabaki discusses workers from northwestern Iran, especially Ardabil, finding employment in such construction projects as the Trans-Caspian Railway in the late nineteenth century. None of the workers discussed in this chapter were old enough to work in these projects, but it indicates a long tradition of providing labor for industrial projects in northwestern Iran.

361 "Kargaran-e rah ahan ra beshenasid," *Mardan-e Ruz*, July 10, 1946.

his employment by the Tabriz-Jolfa Railway under construction in 1914.[362] As these examples suggest, the mobility of children from poor families allowed them to have industrial work experience in neighboring regions outside Iran before the Trans-Iranian Railway project. When the construction of the Trans-Iranian Railway started in the late 1920s, these workers joined the rank of semi-skilled Iranian workers.

Some workers even acquired the crucial skill of locomotive driving in Russia, which afforded upward social mobility. Hosayn Sayyar, a locomotive-engineer trainer in the Tehran Division, worked in agriculture from age seven to seventeen in his native Tabriz before moving to the Russian Empire in 1911 to acquire technical skills. He worked for a silver-making factory in Vladikavkaz in Ossetia for three years before returning to Iran to work for the Tabriz-Jolfa Railway as a switchman, and then a conductor. After turning twenty five, he started to take private lessons in Persian and Russian. Then, he moved to the Soviet Union and received a diploma in driving from the Russian Railway. Afterwards, he returned to Iran in 1925 to work for the Tabriz-Jolfa Railway, which the Soviet Union ceded to the Iranian government based on a 1921 treaty. He joined the Trans-Iranian Railway in 1931 and became a driving instructor, whose monthly salary of approximately 4,700 rials was significantly above other industrial workers in the mid-1940s.[363] As Sayyar's example indicates, the nascent railway industry in Iran was supported by mobile labor of northwestern Iran that frequently crossed

362 "Kargaran-e rah ahan ra beshenasid," *Mardan-e Ruz*, June 19, 1946.

363 "Kargaran-e rah ahan ra beshenasid," *Mardan-e Ruz*, January 16, 1946.

borders for educational and employment opportunities, which in turn encouraged those on the socioeconomic fringes to make an economically upward move.

While railway systems in the Caucasus and Anatolia gave migrant workers from northwestern Iran exposure to industrial work, APOC was the gateway to industrial work for early railway workers in southern Iran. Among the twenty-six interviewed workers, eleven of them worked in Ahvaz, where the headquarters of the South Division was located. Most of them were from Khuzestan, especially Ahvaz and Dezful, with the exceptions of two Isfahanis and one from Chahar Mahal Bakhtiyari. Nine of them, all in their forties and fifties, started to work for the APOC in the 1910s as teenagers and gained experience as mechanics before joining the railway industry.[364] For example, Baqer Simkesh of the South Division was born in Isfahan around 1902 to a poor family of a baker. At the age of seven, he started to work in Isfahani bazaar workshops in filing and engraving to acquire skills. He moved to Tehran after several years to work at the mint, and then at an arsenal. He later moved to Khuzestan to work for the APOC as a mechanic. He continued to work there until he joined railway construction in 1931 in building tunnels of the south line. A life trajectory such as Simkesh's is consistent with Touraj Atabaki's finding that the workforce of the APOC expanded in the 1910s and started to employ those from such cities as Dezful and Isfahan, which did not lie in the

364 "Kargaran-e rah ahan ra beshenasid," *Mardan-e Ruz*, March 13, 1946, March 20, 1946, April 3, 1946, April 10, 1946, April 17, 1946, May 15, 1946, June 26, 1946, July 3, 1946, and July 17, 1946. The two exceptions were an eighty-eight year old employee, the oldest in the Railway Organization in 1946, who had a long work experience as a weapon maker by the twentieth century, and a twenty-eight year old employee, during whose teenage years the Trans-Iranian Railway project had already started. "Kargaran-e rah ahan ra beshenasid," *Mardan-e Ruz*, April 24, 1946, and September 25, 1946.

immediate vicinities of APOC operations.[365] Like Simkesh, during a decade or more of their work experience at the APOC, workers gained necessary skills and expertise as mechanics and technicians. Some even received formal training at the APOC. For example, Ne'matollah Movaffaq, whose father was a carpenter employed by the APOC, began his training at the technical school of the APOC as a twelve-year old boy in 1915 and continued working in the oil company until 1931.[366] As these examples indicate, many early railway workers in southern Iran had gained industrial experience prior to the railway project in the oil industry during the 1910s and 1920s, in some cases moving between oil and railway industries multiple times depending on employment opportunities.[367]

In short, in both northern and southern Iran, the nascent railway industry hinged upon not only foreign workers but also indigenous workers who had gained experience with industrial work in and outside Iran before the 1920s. The geographical mobility of these workers also corresponded to their upward social mobility, too, as many of them experienced their gradual transformation from unskilled construction laborers to semi-skilled or skilled mechanics who specialized in a particular division of the railway industry. Therefore, the life trajectories among these workers were parallel to those of tribal construction workers, who were unskilled and often temporary, as is discussed in Chapter Four. Although no conclusive evidence exists, it is probable that some tribal

365 Touraj Atabaki, "From ʿAmaleh (Labor) to Kargar (Worker)," 167-8.
366 "Kargaran-e rah ahan ra beshenasid," *Mardan-e Ruz*, April 17, 1946.
367 "Kargaran-e rah ahan ra beshenasid," *Mardan-e Ruz*, January 30, 1946.

construction workers in such areas as Lorestan and Khuzestan made similar transformations as the workers discussed here.

Yet, physical mobility was not guaranteed for everybody. A 1930 petition submitted to the Commission of Petitions (*komisiyun-e ʿarayez-e majles-e shura-ye melli*) shed light on how an employer could hinder its employees' move to a better-paid position. The petition was submitted by a seventeen-year old mechanic employed at the factory of the Belgian-owned Shah ʿAbd al-ʿAzim tramway. In 1927, the Ministry of Public Works (*vezarat-e favayed-e ʿammeh*) notified him about an opportunity to move to the Azarbaijan Railway (Tabriz-Jolfa-Sharafkhaneh), which was run by the Iranian state after being ceded from the Soviet Union in 1921. His request for a transfer was denied by the Belgian president of the tramway company, although the petition did not specify the exact reason for this decision. Instead, the company gave him a slight raise in salary in order to keep him. In 1929, he asked again for a transfer authorization from the company, hoping for a tripled salary at the German-American railway syndicate that had started construction of the Trans-Iranian Railway. Again, the company refused to authorize his move to the syndicate. Probably in the hope of dragging the Majles into this minor dispute between an employer and an employee, he concluded the petition by stressing the financial benefit for the railway project of employing him in the syndicate, in comparison with foreign mechanics whose salary would amount to four times as much as his.[368] Although no further reports about this case are available, it indicates that mechanics at the declining tramway company also tried to move to better-paid positions in the Trans-

368 ML7/82/7/1/15.

Iranian Railway project. It also indicates the likelihood that the tramway company was highly concerned about the possible drain of its workers to greener pastures and rejected requests from employees as a way to retain the workforce with a minimal raise in salary.

As this section discussed, the Trans-Iranian Railway project was not the first exposure to industrial work for many early railway workers. Some came to Iran from neighboring regions, especially India and Iraq. This is similar to the role of early workers in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, who sometimes came from India, Persian Gulf ports, and the Ottoman Empire.[369] Aside from foreign workers, many Iranian workers came from regions where opportunities for industrial work existed for children of impoverished families in the chaotic years of World War One. Others relocated, sometimes multiple times, crossing borders. They started out as unskilled workers in existing industries, among which the Tabriz-Jolfa Railway and the APOC were the most prominent employers. Therefore, the Trans-Iranian Railway project contributed to the increased socioeconomic and geographic mobility of unskilled laborers. The next section will discuss the socialization process of these workers from heterogeneous backgrounds.

Making of the Iranian Railway Workforce

As examined in Chapter Four, the Trans-Iranian Railway project created mobile Iranian construction laborers, which in turn fostered interaction not only amongst themselves but also with foreign workers and various state- and quasi-state institutions. Through such interactions, former nomads and peasants such as the Papi tribe were socialized into the

369 Atabaki, "From ʿAmaleh (Labor) to Kargar (Worker)," 164.

world of construction workers and possibly formulated various demands vis-à-vis the state and the railway consortium.

This process of socialization occurred more intensively at new workplaces that were created since the 1935 establishment of the Railway Organization, including repair factories, depots, and stations. In this period, socialization outside the workplace became important since the Organization established numerous recreational facilities in railway workers' communities outside major urban centers. Thus, compared to construction sites of the 1930s, socialization of workers generally took place in the space provided by the Railway Organization. In this sense, the employer played a much larger role in molding workers into disciplined members of the railway industry. Yet, as will be discussed, workers were not simply disciplined into loyal employees of the Railway Organization through the media of socialization provided by their employer. Rather, the Organization developed its culture in a discursive process, with the participation of competing groups of employees whose interests conflicted with the Organization as well as amongst themselves.

When the Allies invaded Iran in September 1941, they took control of Iranian transportation routes, including harbors, railways, and highways, to transport provisions from the Persian Gulf to the Soviet Union. While Soviet forces controlled railway lines that lay north of Tehran, British forces initially controlled lines that lay south of Tehran until American forces took over at the beginning of 1943. As mentioned in Chapter Four, the Allied control of transportation routes and the subsequent restrictions on civilian traffic severely disrupted the economy and transport of food and other daily consumption

items, causing inflation and famine throughout the occupation period. In fact, the cost of living multiplied more than sevenfold between 1939 and 1944.[370] This rapid inflation hit the salaried class of railway workers hard, as increases in their salary could not keep up with the rapidity of inflation. For the majority of railway workers, making ends meet became extremely difficult, raising expectations for the improvement of economic conditions after the occupation.

The coming of the Allies also impacted the composition of railway workers significantly during the war. Soldiers of the Allied Forces, including those from India, were deployed all along the transportation routes that connected the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea and began working along with existing Iranian railway workers. Once the occupation started, it quickly became clear that the approximately 8,000 Railway Organization employees at the time were insufficient to operate the Trans-Iranian Railway, whose transportation capacity multiplied thanks to the massive construction projects undertaken by the Allies.[371] The urgent need for workers in the railway sector led to the employment of thousands of Iranians. No available evidence tells much about how these newly employed Iranians and others were socialized in the workplace during the occupation. Yet, the condition of workers at the American-controlled truck assembly factories in Khorramshahr and Andimeshk as well as truck drivers discussed below, is

370 Nikki R. Keddie, *Modern Iran*: Roots and Results of Revolution (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 108.
371 Malakuti, *Rah Ahan-e Iran*, 66.

likely to have resembled the condition of the railway repair factories and depots built during the Allied occupation.

The two American-controlled factories were General Motors' factories prior to the American arrival to Iran in 1943. They employed over 5,000 workers, or approximately one in seven civilian employees of the Persian Gulf Command of the United States.[372] Iranians from various religious and ethnic groups comprised the vast majority, but a small number of non-Iranian citizens also found employment there, including "Iraqis, Afghans, Armenians, Egyptians, Arabians, Sudanese, and Indians as well as others."[373] Although having a diverse workforce served its purpose on such occasions as Ramadan, during which Armenians worked on the day shift and Muslims on the night shift, assembly lines did not mix different groups of Iranians such as Arabs and Armenians with Persian-speaking Muslim Iranians.[374] Thus, similar to railway construction sites, in order to minimize religious and ethnic tensions, factories in the transportation sector during the occupation era maintained the division of labor among religious and ethnic groups.

In addition to the tensions among diverse groups, the lack of experienced personnel posed an urgent problem to ensure the successful transport of provisions, which was exacerbated by the lack of a common language between most Iranians and the Allies. The Motor Transport Service of Americans established three courses to train

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372 Joel Sayre, *I Served in the Persian Gulf Command*, 27 and 33.
373 Ibid., 21.
374 Ibid., 22.

Iranian truck drivers as promptly as possible, but the task was too time-consuming. To expedite the process, Iranian truck drivers and other semi-skilled workers, including mechanics, blacksmiths, and bricklayers, often received "on the job" training[375] Consequently, a number of less qualified personnel had to fill the positions in the transportation sector to meet the urgent needs of the war. Therefore, when the end of the European war grew near, the motor transport sector faced major issues of a divided workforce and the lack of qualified personnel.

Similar to the motor transport sector, having a large number of unqualified workers could seriously compromise the safety of the Iranian State Railway, too, since the end of the occupation meant that Allied soldiers who operated the railways during the occupation would be gone. While celebrating the imminent departure of occupiers, the Railway Organization had to prepare itself to tackle the issue of the lack of experienced railway workers. Like the new truck drivers, many new railway workers who started during the Allied occupation seriously lacked proper training and basic knowledge of railway technology. Therefore, the Organization needed to expand opportunities for proper training urgently, despite the budget cuts resulting from the decline of railway traffic by the end of the war.[376] Training Iranian employees turned out to be difficult, however. According to one article of *Mardan-e Ruz*, the problem of many Iranian railway workers was their lack of previous exposure to technology prior to employment. Unlike

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375 Ibid., 33.

376 Due to budget cuts, some training classes were cancelled immediately after the end of the war. See "'Adam-e edameh-ye amuzeshgah," *Mardan-e Ruz*, August 29, 1945.

European and American workers who were accustomed to being surrounded by technologies from childhood, Iranian workers often had absolutely no exposure to the smallest and simplest gadgets and had to learn how to use each of them after gaining employment as railway workers. Even more problematically, many did not have basic literacy, which significantly hindered learning.[377]

To make matters worse, once the war was over, the Organization no longer needed as many employees. There was no need to transport provisions to the Soviet Union, and highways became open to civilian traffic once again, both of which led to the decline of railway traffic. The Railway Organization immediately responded by downsizing, the result of which was the massive layoff of approximately 12,000 employees, or one third of its workforce between 1945 and 1946. The Organization also encouraged employees to take up positions elsewhere, most notably in the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, which had signed an agreement to hire qualified employees of the Railway Organization. Since both the oil industry and the railway industry had a wide range of operations, the positions that opened up for employees of the Railway Organization were comprehensive. They included accountants, blacksmiths, chemists, mechanics, sanitation investigators, teachers, cooking teachers, dentists, surgeons, pharmacists, nurses, architects, telegraph operators, and so forth.[378] Nevertheless, the vast majority of the 12,000 laid-off employees were unable to find comparable jobs.

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377 "Sana'at va amuzesh," *Mardan-e Ruz*, April 11, 1945.

378 "Bikaran-e Rah Ahan," *Mardan-e Ruz*, 15 August, 1945.

Those who remained in the Organization were also extremely underpaid. In fact, even many of the comparatively well-paid employees introduced in "Know the Workers of the Railway" noted their destitution and their struggle to support a large family with a modest monthly income of mostly between two thousand to three thousand rial, which was higher than the entry-level salary of a little over one thousand rial. While these exemplary workers stressed frugality and having a second job as a key to survivving, others took a more dubious path. *Mardan-e Ruz* articles occasionally addressed the widely shared public perception that railway workers engaged in theft. For instance, a poetically written article from 1946 reminded the readers of the crisis that the Railway Organization was facing in the postwar period. It pointed out that the reason that nobody thought about using the railway and used trucks instead was not just the availability of motor traffic after the end of the occupation. Possibly in reference to a 1945 railway accident that killed dozens of passengers, the article claimed that it was also because they knew "trains get derailed, wagons get burned, and items get stolen."[379] The article rhetorically asked if the reader would expect merchants to let the railway handle their merchandise when the Organization did not even admit its responsibility for theft, nor did it compensate for damages to merchandise due to accidents.[380] Therefore, railway

379 "Ey Rah Ahan baraye To va beh Fekr-e To Hastim, Naomid Mabash," *Mardan-e Ruz*, October 2, 1946. For the first half of the article, see *Mardan-e Ruz*, September 25, 1946.

380 For an article that attributed theft by employees to underpayment, see "Ezdiyad-e Daramad-e Rah Ahan," *Mardan-e Ruz*, January 23, 1946. For another article that connected underpayment to theft, in response to accusations by another newspaper *Mard-e Emruz*, see "Nameh-ye Varedeh," February 13, 1946, *Mardan-e Ruz*.

workers' solutions to economic problems were not always collective action such as protests, strikes, or petitioning with specific demands. In the space whose rules were set by the Railway Organization, the de Certeauian tactics of workers could be as simple and spontaneous as theft, which did not solve the fundamental problem but gave workers an ephemeral gain.

In this condition of uncertainty among employees, the Railway Organization took several related measures to create productive Iranian railway workers: 1) creating knowledgeable and healthy workers through education and training; 2) providing institutions and facilities that were meant to enhance workers' social lives; 3) indigenizing the workforce; 4) promoting a new official narrative of railway history. These measures could placate the Organization's employees and boost their morale by fulfilling the needs of employees and expressing nationalist sentiments, which became increasingly more vocal as a popular movement after World War II and would soon culminate in the oil nationalization movement in 1951.[381] As I will discuss, these measures developed almost simultaneously with the rise of an organized dissent among the Railway Organization's frustrated employees in the postwar period.

Institutions for training railway workers existed since the late 1930s, such as the first training course that was offered in 1936 as a six-month program in motion and the first industrial school (*honaretan-e rah ahan*) that opened in 1940 and incorporated a

381 For the oil nationalization movement, see James A. Bill and W.M. Roger Louis eds., *Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 1988).

one-year on-the-job training in the curriculum.[382] But they expanded both in number and scope only towards the end of the occupation. By early 1946, 3,580 workers completed 22 kinds of training courses that were typically offered as two-hours class taken twice a week. The courses included such diverse subjects as driving, cranes, repairing, construction, accounting, and police work. In addition, 400 students graduated from the three-year industrial school and joined the workforce.[383] Adult Persian literacy courses specifically for railway workers expanded, too. In Qom and Arak alone, over two hundred workers gained literacy during early 1948.[384]

The Railway Organization also promoted health among its workers. It constructed various sporting facilities such as soccer fields, basketball fields, tennis courts, and swimming pools and required physical education at the industrial school.[385] Furthermore, the Sanitation Division of the Organization increased the number of hospitals and dispensaries along the routes, including a 50-bed hospital in Ahvaz.[386] Along with regular medical treatments, the division offered treatments to opium-addicted employees "confidentially," so that patients did not have to worry about having negative records on their company files.[387] Given the concurrent wave of layoffs that hit the workers,

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382 Malakuti, *Rah Ahan-e Iran*, 202-3.

383 "Kholaseh-ye gozaresh-e aqa-ye mohandes-e razmara, raʾis-e amuzesh-e fanni," *Mardan-e Ruz*, March 20, 1946.

384 Malakuti, *Rah Ahan-e Iran*, 410.

385 Ibid., 208.

386 Ibid., 259-62.

387 "Moʿarrefi va moʿalejeh-ye karmandan-e moʾtad beh taryak be behdari," *Mardan-e Ruz*, July 4, 1945.

however, many addicts probably chose not to receive treatments, despite warnings from the division that untreated addicts would be laid off first.

The Railway Organization provided more than education, training, and health services. To enhance both workers' productivity and the quality of their lives, it also created facilities and institutional frameworks for sports and leisure. Prior to the Allied occupation, the Organization built facilities generally in provinces that the Pahlavi state prioritized, most notably Mazandaran and Khuzestan. Yet, towards the end of the occupation, more facilities were established in other provinces, often by converting former facilities left by the Allies.

The case of the Arak Division in central Iran demonstrates the expansion of facilities provided by the Organization in the late 1940s. The Arak Division extended from Qom Station to Dorud Station in Lorestan via Arak Station. The division was primarily rural, with the Shi'i pilgrimage site of Qom and the emerging industrial city of Arak being the two major stations equipped with railway facilities such as depots, power plants, and water refineries.[388] Yet, with the exception of some training courses for workers, institutions and facilities for railway workers and their families were seriously lacking before the occupation.

After the occupation, other than training programs and hospitals, numerous railway institutions and facilities opened within the Arak Division and became important parts of workers' lives. Two former American military camps were converted to sanatoriums in Arak and Qom, and another in Qom was converted to a railway club

388 Malakuti, *Rah Ahan-e Iran*, 404-5.

(*bashgah-e rah ahan*). A larger club that opened in Arak in 1945 enjoyed a membership of over 1,000 and such recreational facilities as a cinema, bar, buffet restaurant, and furnished salon with a radio and newspapers.[389] Although railway clubs such as these existed on a much smaller scale before the occupation, they expanded in the postwar period, with improved facilities such as salons, sporting fields, and party rooms.[390] Facilities in Arak paled in comparison with other large stations like Tehran and Ahvaz, which had separate clubs for various groups within the Organization such as graduates of the industrial school, engineers, accountants, technicians, and drivers.[391] Yet, the railway club in Arak still boasted sporting facilities for soccer, wrestling in both traditional Iranian and Greco-Roman styles, and swimming. Workers could practice various sports, and during the companywide competitions held by the Railway Organization, they could compete with workers from other divisions, or even with students of the railway industrial school.[392] Therefore, the new railway institutions and facilities fostered an environment in which railway workers could mingle with each other, even with those outside their immediate workplaces and divisions. Particularly because many workers lived in small provincial cities in which industrial workers from outside the railway industry did not exist on a large scale, the new institutions and facilities formed the basis of many workers' social lives outside their working hours. In other words, at least in

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389 Ibid., 410-11. See also "Ta'sis-e bashgah-e rah ahan dar nahiyeh-ye arak," *Mardan-e Ruz*, February 14, 1945.
390 Malakuti, *Rah Ahan-e Iran*, 209.
391 Ibid., 209-11.
392 Ibid., 208.

theory, both their work and leisure came to be defined by the Railway Organization, creating an environment that was conducive to the workers' dependency on their employer and their personal attachment to the Organization.

The Railway Organization's new facilities catered not only to workers themselves but also to their families. For instance, former American military camps within railway stations in Arak and Qom were converted into residential buildings and housed over 100 families in Arak and over 50 in Qom.[393] Also, churches for Allied soldiers were converted into mosques in early 1948 and opened with names of Iranian railway workers who lost their lives due to work-related railway accidents.[394] Furthermore, workers' children received education at elementary schools owned by the Organization. These schools often boasted names of prominent individuals who played an important role in the history of railways in Iran in order to remind employees and their families of the unique condition of their schools as schools for railway workers' communities. The elementary school in Arak was converted from an American military barracks and opened as Varnus School in 1945, which was named after the former general manager of the Railway Organization. Likewise, the elementary school in Qom, which was converted from a former American military barracks, opened in early 1948 as Sani' al-Dowleh School. In the same year, another elementary school named Pirniya School, which was named after Hasan Pirniya, the prominent statesman of the Reza Shah period, opened in the small Lorestani town of Azna, indicating the rapid expansion of educational

393 Ibid., 413.
394 Ibid., 412.

institutions for children of railway workers.[395] Thus, similar to the workers of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, not only the lives of workers but also those of their families became increasingly incorporated into institutions and facilities offered by the Railway Organization.

Providing comprehensive facilities and institutions for workers and their families had several effects. First, the Organization could potentially buy the loyalty of workers through these perquisites. Moreover, it would allow the Organization to monopolize the space for social interaction among workers in the workplace as well as outside work. Such monopolization could be conducive to a shared sense of belonging among workers, who increasingly felt the ubiquitous presence of the Organization in every aspect of their lives. This was especially true when workers' dependency on the organization was already high due to their having to live in remote areas in which they needed to rely on their employer to send food trains even for groceries and other daily consumption items. Furthermore, as the last section of this chapter will discuss, this served the Organization's interest in controlling its workforce in the tumultuous political milieu of the late 1940s, which allowed various groups, including Tudeh-influenced labor unions, to voice their opinions as a result of weakened central authority.

While establishing new facilities had the effect of including Iranian workers thoroughly into the Organization and making its presence felt everywhere in their lives, by the late 1940s, non-Iranian employees increasingly felt unwelcome. As discussed in Chapter Four in the case of construction sites during the Reza Shah period, the

395 Ibid., 226 and 409.

antagonism toward non-Iranian employees itself was nothing new, particularly when there existed a significant gap in income and contractual status between Iranians and non-Iranians. By the late 1940s, however, such factors as the spread of nationalism as a popular movement in Iran as well as the growth of anti-colonial movements in Asia more generally increased the resentment toward foreign interventions in Iranian affairs. Moreover, these factors increased the confidence among Iranian workers with their ability to run the Organization without the presence of foreign employees.

This exclusion was both implicit and explicit. Immediately after the return of lines south of Tehran to Iranian hands in June 1945, an article in *Mardan-e Ruz* declared that the Organization was "a national asset that is bestowed in our hands" to celebrate the departure of the occupiers and encouraged "every patriotic and conscientious Iranian to protect this asset sincerely and love it like one's own house."[396] Others were more explicit in rejecting the presence of foreign employees. For example, a Railway Organization engineer denounced foreign employees of the Organization for having caused much harm because of their lack of qualifications, higher salary, incompetence in management, and nepotism.[397]

While the engineer clearly had his European counterparts in mind, middle-income semi-skilled workers from neighboring countries also became targets of criticism and exclusion. Due to their lower income compared to foreign engineers and managers, they

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396 "Nazari beh vaz'yat-e fe'li-ye rah ahan," *Mardan-e Ruz*, June 20, 1945.

397 "Karmandan-e biganeh dar khedmat-e dowlat," *Mardan-e Ruz*, March 7, 1945. For a more balanced view, see "Ta'sir-e chahar sal hamkari ba mottafeqin," *Mardan-e Ruz*, May 16, 1945.

particularly suffered from the combination of deteriorating economic conditions in the 1940s and their ineligibility for certain benefits. For instance, six foreign workers, headed by the Indian locomotive driver Manuchehr Rostamji, submitted a complaint to the Majles about their benefits. According to their letter, all complainants worked on railway construction and operation even before the establishment of the Organization in 1935. Despite their long service and commitment, they complained, they were not eligible for subsidies to purchase bread due to their foreign citizenship. With their monthly salary ranging from 1,200 to 2,000 riyals, it was impossible to feed their entire families.[398] Thus, with the rise of nationalism and the maturation of the indigenous workforce, semi-skilled foreign workers like Rostamji felt more compelled to start a new life elsewhere after almost two decades in Iran. In effect, the measures discussed above delineated the Organization's boundary separating insiders and outsiders. New institutions and facilities increased the everyday presence of the Organization in the lives of workers and their families to make them insiders of the Organization regardless of regional and socioeconomic backgrounds of the workers. In contrast, foreign employees were placed outside the boundary both in rhetoric and practice.

Such politics of inclusion and exclusion were also at work in the framing of the official narrative of Iranian railways. In addition to numerous events to commemorate railway construction and operation as well as the Iranian press that reported those events, two books on the history of Iranian railways contributed to the formation of the official narrative. One was "*Rah Ahan-e Sarasar-e Iran* (The Trans-Iranian Railway)," a book

398 ML14/93/39/1/88.

published by The Ministry of Roads in 1938 to commemorate the Railway's completion.[399] The other was "*Rah Ahan-e Iran* (Iranian Railways)," a book written by an engineer of the Railway Organization to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the 1927 beginning of Trans-Iranian Railway construction. Thus, the initial official narrative was developed in the late Reza Shah period for the general audience while the new official narrative emerged in the postwar period with the approval of the Railway Organization.

The new official narrative shared many features of the older narrative. Most notably, as the old narrative did, the new narrative legitimized monarchical rule. It continued to attribute the construction of the Trans-Iranian Railway and the supposed nationwide achievement of progress, productiveness, and happiness primarily to Reza Shah. This interpretation was canonized in the 1947 inscription on the column that commemorated the twentieth anniversary of the beginning of railway construction, which read, "thanks to the capability of His Majesty Reza Shah Pahlavi, the first pickaxe to build the Trans-Iranian Railway hit the ground on Mehr 23, 1306."[400] The legitimacy of Mohammad Reza Shah as the heir to his father's legacy was symbolically displayed through his presence on exactly the same spot, exactly twenty years later, during the opening ceremony of the column along with the railway museum in Tehran. The scene was disseminated among Iranians through the display of the photograph taken during the ceremony, along with the exhibition of other photographs of the royal family and the

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399 *Rah Ahan-e Sarasar-e Iran* (Tehran: Vezarat-e Toroq, 1938).
400 Malakuti, *Rah Ahan-e Iran*, 146.

Trans-Iranian Railway, which not only adult visitors but also school children viewed at the exhibition.[401]

The new narrative's noticeable departure from the older narrative was the role of the Iranian people in completing the Trans-Iranian Railway. In the narrative of the Reza Shah period, the only "Iranian people" mentioned in statesmen's speeches and press articles were taxpayers, who made significant sacrifices by consuming the exorbitantly-priced tea and sugar monopolized by the state to fund the railway project. In fact, in the inauguration ceremony of the Trans-Iranian Railway, Reza Shah said, "I am truly satisfied with the Iranian people, who were prepared for the reform of the country from the bottom of their heart and paid the expenses for railway construction with pure heart because they recognized that this policy would be the cause of happiness and progress for Iran."[402] The shah did not explicitly mention workers' contributions and sacrifices. In contrast, the new narrative promoted in the postwar period began to stress the role of railway workers, especially during the Allied occupation. For instance, the official corporate history published by the Railway Organization in 1948 praised Iranian railway workers at length and urged them to shout proudly to the Allies, "Your victory owes to our efforts and sacrifices (*fath-e shoma marhun-e zahmat va jafeshaniha-ye ma ast*)."[403] Thus, while hardly ever mentioned in the narrative of the Reza Shah period, railway workers were acknowledged in the post-occupation narrative as essential contributors to

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401 Within approximately one month after opening, the exhibition attracted a total of 25,000 visitors. Ibid., 152.
402 Ibid., 44.
403 Ibid., 116.

the victory of the Allies in World War II and the subsequent end of the occupation, driving out foreign occupiers from the homeland. By stressing the contribution of Iranian railway workers as national heroes in the new narrative, the Organization attempted to secure the loyalty of its employees as a unified force.

These measures that had the effect of securing the loyalty of workers developed almost simultaneously with another change. In the 1940s, overt expressions of discontentment among railway workers intensified through organized activism and frequent petitioning to various state apparatuses, including the Railway Organization, the Majles, and Mohammad Reza Shah himself. On one level, workers' expressions of discontentment reveal the deep divisions among Iranian employees of the Organization, which attempted to conceal them by presenting an image of a united Iranian workforce. They also suggest that measures taken by the Organization, such as monopolizing sites of social interaction and constructing an official narrative, were not a matter of the Organization imposing its power to control on railway workers. Rather, the Organization's methods of control developed discursively. In effect, repeated expressions of discontentment by railway workers, in tandem with new institutions and facilities of the Railway Organization that were established in the postwar period, had the effect of normalizing the presence of the Pahlavi state and its apparatuses in their daily lives.

Although limited in scale and impact compared to the post-Reza Shah period, railway workers had already started to take collective action before the 1941 abdication of Reza Shah. As early as in 1928, immediately after the beginning of railway construction, railway construction workers formed the Union of Northern Railway

Workers (*Ettehadiyeh-ye Kargaran-e Rah Ahan-e Shomal*).[404] The promptness in establishing the union might indicate the role of those who had experience with industrial work elsewhere such as Russia and the Caucasus, as discussed earlier. After fighting to win rights for Mazandarani wage laborers for several years, the union expanded to southern Iran in 1935. Nevertheless, its stronghold apparently remained Mazandaran, as *Zafar*, the Tudeh Party's organ, claimed that most workers in the north were under the union until the notorious arrest of the 53 communists in 1937, which led to the brutal suppression of communist activities and labor unions until the end of the Reza Shah period.[405] Particularly since many railway workers of the 1940s started off as construction workers in the Reza Shah period, their experience with collective action from the construction period is likely to have impacted how railway workers expressed discontent from the 1940s onwards.

After the collapse of central authority following the Allied invasion, various workers' organizations emerged separately until they were combined to form the Union of Railway Workers (*Ettehadiyeh-ye Kargaran-e Rah Ahan*) in June 1944.[406] The union established 22 circuits (*howzeh*), each of which initially consisted of 20-25 members and rapidly increased membership among railway workers. Within a few years, branches of

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404 "Gozaresh-e haʾyat-e ʿammeh-ye ettehdiyehha-ye kargaran-e rah ahan," *Zafar*, August 11, 1946.

405 Ibid., For the 53 communists, see Ervand Abrahamian, *Tortured Confessions: Prisons and Public Recantations in Modern Iran* (Berkeley and Los Angels: University of California Press, 1999).

406 Ibid. See also Habib Ladjevardi, *Labor Unions and Autocracy in Iran* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 47.

the Union were established in smaller communities of railway workers such as Garmsar, causing confrontations between the Union and the local police.[407] In addition to strikes and protests to make demands, donations to unemployed workers, and invitations to representatives of unions from other companies, the Union of Railway Workers gave out free tickets to film screenings to workers and offered adult literacy courses, competing with the service offered by the Railway Organization.

Although strikes and protests stood out as the most visible moments in which workers expressed their discontentment, railway workers, whether active union members or not, participated in other forms of disobedience more frequently. Most common among these alternative methods of expressing discontentment was writing petitions to various state apparatuses and have them printed in both the Railway Organization's publications and left-leaning newspapers that mushroomed in the 1940s. For instance, along with letters from readers, *Mardan-e Ruz* allocated a generous space to print some of the petitions as well as actions taken by the Organization in response to them in order to demonstrate to its readers the Organization's responsiveness. Thus, like landowners and construction workers examined in Chapter Four, railway workers directly engaged with state apparatuses. Yet, unlike landowners and construction workers, they had a medium of communication with a much larger audience of workers through left-leaning

407 "Telegraf az garmsar," *Zafar*, May 29, 1946. For examples of strikes, see "E'tesab-e kargaran-e depow-ye rah ahan," *Zafar*, March 6, 1946, "Qabel-e tavajjoh-e bongah-e rah ahan," *Zafar*, May 28, 1946, and "Gozaresh-e ha'yat-e 'ammeh-ye ettehdiyehha-ye kargaran-e rah ahan," *Zafar*, August 11, 1946.

newspapers and shared their discontentment relatively easily, due to the relaxation of censorship in post-Reza Shah Iran.[408]

Broadly speaking, demands of railway workers in petitions fell into three categories: namely, working and living conditions, salary, and insurance. Matters related to working and living conditions included the following: 1) the provision of free summer and winter clothing and blankets to all workers, including wage laborers; 2) no work on holidays including Fridays; 3) the acquisition of proper housing with water, electricity, and means of transport for workers who had no house to rent in the vicinities of workplaces; 4) the distribution of food for an appropriate price all along the railway routes.[409] The latter two issues were peculiarly important to railway workers, whose communities scattered all along the railway routes, including small towns, and even in major cities, locations that were distant from city centers. For instance, workers at Andimeshk Station relied on food train service for such basic daily consumption items as bread and meat. Thus, when vendors overpriced them by tampering with the weighing system, the workers immediately relied on petitioning.[410] Likewise, Ahvaz Station workers demanded the purchase of a bus to commute from Ahvaz Station and their living

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408 Nevertheless, selling left-leaning newspapers such as *Rahbar*, *Zafar*, *Mardom*, and *Neda-ye Haqiqat* was prohibited in certain public places such as railway stations. "Jelowgiri az forush-e ruznamehha-ye azadikhah," *Zafar*, March 1, 1946.

409 "Nameh-ye Varedeh," *Mardan-e Ruz*, February 6, 1946, "Miting-e kargaran-e rah ahan," *Zafar*, March 1, 1946, "Qat'nameh-ye kargaran-e rah ahan," *Zafar*, March 15, 1946, and "Kargaran-e nahiyeh-ye rah ahan-e jonub," *Zafar*, May 27, 1946.

410 "Namehha-ye varedeh," *Mardan-e Ruz*, February 6, 1946.

quarters, which stood more than three kilometers from the station, since walking that distance in the scorching summer of Khuzestan would be impossible.[411]

While matters of working and living conditions affected all workers and did not cause major schisms among them, issues of salary revealed divisions within the railway workforce in the mid 1940s, when the Organization was going through a massive downsizing and budget cuts. The division was not so much between low-salary Iranian versus high-salary non-Iranian, as the official narrative of post-1945 Iran portrayed. Rather, after about three years of the Allied occupation, the division between the "natives (*bowmi*)" and "non-natives (*gheir-e bowmi*)" surfaced in railway workplaces. The division was particularly serious in such cities as Arak in central Iran and Andimeshk in southern Iran, which experienced an influx of Iranian workers from other provinces during the occupation as centers of rail transport that were equipped with depots and repair factories.

In 1943, railway workers who lived under a harsh climate outside their home regions started to receive a benefit that purported to incentivize their continued employment in southern Iran. Yet, possibly due to the deteriorating financial condition of the Organization, the benefit was cancelled. In response to this cancellation, workers in Andimeshk Station, depot, and locomotive repair factory filed petitions in the summer of 1944 to various state entities, including the Majles, The Minister of Roads, and the Railway Organization, as well as such newspapers as *Ettelaʿat* and *Rahbar*. The petitioners' complaint hinged upon two points. First, they justified the benefit in terms of

411 Ibid., and "Kargaran-e nahiyeh-ye rah ahan-e jonub."

their significant contribution to the Allies' war efforts. They stressed that they worked "night and day to fulfill their duty and play an important role for the goal of progress of the Allies" despite the poverty and harsh climate that they had to endure in Andimeshk. Given the higher salary of foreign employees, they rhetorically asked, "in a condition like this, how are we supposed to work next to foreigners and Americans at the factory?"[412] Second, they accused Tehran of making decisions "while sitting in perfect comfort behind a desk," being unable to imagine the harsh summer of southern Iran.[413] Whether these petitions impacted policymakers or not, the benefit was reinstalled later.

The debate did not end here, however. This time, native workers of the south complained that the benefit constituted a discrimination against native workers vis-à-vis non-native workers. The complaint made several points. First, both native and non-native workers contributed equally to the war effort. Second, both native and non-native workers needed the same amount of money to make ends meet. Third, both native and non-native workers experienced the same summer.[414] The Organization responded to the complaint by citing the law that stipulated the distribution of the benefit as an aid to struggling workers, but not surprisingly, it did not make native workers eligible for the same benefit.

Aside from the schism between native and non-native workers, the debate over the benefit revealed how the culture of petitioning discussed in Chapter Four remained

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412 ML14/93/39/1/65.

413 Ibid.

414 "Varedeh: Magar ma karmand nistim?" *Mardan-e Ruz*, March 7, 1945, and "Baz ham karmandan-e bowmi," *Mardan-e Ruz*, April 14, 1945.

largely intact until the mid-twentieth century. Both native and non-native workers relied on petitioning not only to their employer but also to other men of power within the state to influence their decisions. Both sides also used the press to share their ideas widely, to which the Organization responded by using the same medium. Through such interaction, the presence of the Organization as well as other state apparatuses became part of daily lives of Iranian railway workers, who, until a decade or two before, lived as rank-and-file nomads, peasants, or vendors, with less direct interaction with state entities.

Furthermore, the debate exemplified how the occupation period emboldened workers' demands. Repeatedly, various workers' petitions justified their demands by framing them as legitimate rewards for the sacrifices and contributions they made during the Allied occupation. As workers in Arak pleaded, having lived "for four years away from families" as workers for the railway system that functioned like the aorta of the Allied Forces, they felt entitled to "go back to their home regions" or have a higher salary.[415] In another petition to Mohammad Reza Shah, one hundred employees stated that Iranians like themselves sacrificed so much, even their lives, to win of the war, and thus deserved a better life now that the war was over. By asking rhetorically how one could support himself and his family with only one thousand rial per month, the letter demanded extra pay for the Iranian New Year, one of the perquisites that were abolished

415 "Namehha-ye varedeh," *Mardan-e Ruz*, February 27, 1946.

after the end of the occupation, so that workers would have enough to celebrate Nowruz in the coming month.[416]

Therefore, the reframing of the official narrative that crystallized in *Rah Ahan-e Iran*, the 1948 book discussed earlier, did not evolve independently of the changes that occurred among railway workers. The overt inclusion of railway workers in the official narrative was a result of continued demands by workers to be compensated for their contribution to the war in numerous petitions. Railway workers capitalized on their role in winning the Trans-Iranian Railway using the epithet, the "victory bridge (*pol-e piruzi*)" to stress that they deserved to receive rewards from their employer. In return, the financially troubled Railway Organization acknowledged its workers' role during the occupation in the canonized narrative of *the* history of railways and in an attempt to placate the frustrated workers.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the formation of the Iranian railway workforce from the turn of the twentieth century to midcentury, on the eve of the oil nationalization movement. Contrary to the nationalist historiography that stresses the role of the Pahlavi state in the formation and shaping of the first generation of Iranian railway workers, I have stressed the importance of mobile non-state actors who crossed borders in search of economic opportunities. Along with Iranian travelogues to Iran's surrounding world discussed in Chapter Three, the active movement of migrant workers suggests that historians need to

416 Ibid.

continue resituating Iran in multiple regional frameworks to understand nation-building projects such as the Trans-Iranian Railway project. It also demonstrates that an overemphasis on the interaction between Iran and the "West" could obfuscate how the railway system became an integral part of the Iranian landscape. Similar to the case of Egypt at the turn of the century, a large number of southern Europeans came to Iran in search of an employment. Yet, as a latecomer to the railway age, experiences of Turkey, the Caucasus, India, and Iraq also impacted the formation of the Iranian railway workforce.

As employees of the largest state organization, railway workers, who were divided by various factors such as ethnicity, nationality, education, rank, age, and political belief, intensified interaction with the state, primarily the Railway Organization, by the mid-twentieth century. These heterogeneous workers of the Organization experienced socialization with other railway workers in the space provided by the Railway Organization,[417] while having opportunities to socialize in the space created by the union as well. Therefore, the Railway Organization's attempts at controlling its workers emerged in conversation with workers' parallel attempts, as exemplified by examples such as competing adult literacy courses and film screenings. The Railway Organization attempted to win the "heart and minds" of workers by not only

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417 The increasing role of the employer in the social life of employees in Iranian megaprojects was not limited to the Railway Organization. The Khuzestan Development Program promoted the same model in the mid-twentieth century. Brian Mann, "Development Arrested?: David E. Lilienthal, the Khuzistan Development Program, and the Arabs of Iran," a presentation at the 2014 annual meeting of Middle Eastern Studies Association in Washington D.C., on November 23, 2014.

monopolizing the space of socialization but also crafting a historical narrative that acknowledged the contribution of railway workers in ending World War Two. Just as workers challenged the dominance of the Organization in the competition for the space for socialization, they challenged the official narrative of the Organization. While the Organization used the narrative to boost workers' pride in the Railway Organization, workers used it to demand the betterment of their economic conditions. Although evidence is extremely limited, it is conceivable that in a similar manner, workers' use of the space provided by the Organization resulted in the sharing of grievances against their employer, allowing them to shape an identity as railway workers with rights, not the loyal railway workers that the Organization hoped to mold them into.

The next chapter will shift gears from builders and operators of the railway to travelers by examining the spatial politics of the Iranian railway. The railway space that came into being after the Trans-Iranian Railway project became a site of interaction among all the groups discussed so far, including British officers, Iranian modernists, Lor tribes, and railway workers, along with heterogeneous passengers of the railway.

(Figure 5.1) Railway factory workers in the late 1930s. COWI Archives, Iran Tehran Banegard, F60, 106.

Chapter 6: Traveling Citizens in the Railway Space[418]

Introduction

Abu al-Hasan Ebtehaj, the pioneer of economic planning in Iran, recalled traveling in a horse-drawn carriage from Rasht to Tehran during World War One as one of the worst agonies of his adolescence.[419] Confined in a four-person carriage, travelers had to endure the constant sway of the carriage traveling on a bumpy dirt road, as well as intense heat in the carriage when the windows were closed, or the dust and flies when the windows were open. The slow journey ended every day at a roadside inn (*mehmankhaneh*), where the tired travelers and horses rested.[420]

Within a few decades, intercity travel by carriage had become a distant memory for the wealthy in Tehran. Najmeh Najafi, who grew up in a well-to-do clerical family in early-Pahlavi Tehran, detailed how she used to listen to her mother's recollections and romanticize the uncertainties of traveling by camel or carriage. Compared to traveling in the back seat of a chauffeur-driven foreign car, long journeys through the trails from one inn to another while watching out for tribal raids sounded "much more interesting."[421] At the same time, she dreamed of traveling afar, especially by the Trans-Iranian Railway,

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418 Another version of this material has been accepted to *International Journal of Middle East Studies* as "The Vernacular Journey: Railway Travelers in Early Pahlavi Iran, 1925-1950."

419 For Ebtehaj, see Frances Bostock and Geoffrey Jones. *Planning and Power in Iran: Ebtehaj and Economic Development under the Shah* (London: Frank Cass, 1989).

420 Abu al-Hasan Ebtehaj. *Khaterat-e Abu al-Hasan Ebtehaj* (Tehran: ʿElmi, 1996), 7-8.

421 Najmeh Najafi and Helen Hinckley Jones. *Persia is My Heart* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1953), 51-2.

which was under construction then. Adults around her only complained about the heavy taxes on tea and sugar to fund the project. Yet, the railway completely captured the little girl's imagination. At school, at home, at the public bathhouse, and in the streets, every time she heard about the railway, her wanderlust to travel afar by the railway was reignited. About a decade later, shortly after the end of World War Two, her dream came true when she visited Mazandaran by train on vacation. She was utterly fascinated by the nature of her country, which had been recently freed from the Allied occupation, and did not even converse with her family for fear of missing something more profound that might be passing by outside the window.[422]

The opening of the Trans-Iranian Railway transformed experiences of traveling for various types of travelers such as vacationers, pilgrims, and local villagers. For one thing, traveling became speedier. Between 1920 and 1950, the travel time from Tehran to Baghdad was shortened from a month or so to around fifty hours. With this change, the kind of prolonged discomfort that Ebtehaj experienced became a nostalgic past to be romanticized.[423] Furthermore, the coming of railways meant the creation of the railway

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422 Ibid., 103-4.

423 In the 1920s, a trip from Tehran to Baghdad via Hamadan took twenty-eight to forty-two days by animal transport. When an Iranian traveler left for Baghdad from Tehran via Ahvaz and Basra in 1945, his journey took only fifty hours (twenty-five hours from Tehran to Ahvaz by train, eight hours to go to Basra by car and wait at the railway station, and seventeen hours from Basra to Baghdad). For traveling in the 1920s, see Clawson, "Knitting Iran Together," 236-7. For the timetable of the Iranian State Railway, "Agahi: Barnameh-ye Vorud va Khoruj-e Qatarha-ye Mosaferi az Tehran dar Salha-ye 1323-24," *Mardan-e Ruz*, May 23, 1945. For the travelogue, Mohammad Arjomand, *Shesh Sal dar Darbar-e Pahlavi*. ed. ʿAbd al-Reza Mahdavi (Tehran: Nashr-e Paykan, 2006), 262-6.

space —a new public space of railways that comprised of stations, platforms, railway cars, and tracks—in the everyday lives of ordinary Iranians.[424]

Scholars have examined how modern urban space was produced and reproduced not simply by grandiose Haussmannization projects but through the everyday use of the space by its occupants, whose use of it often deviated from the modernist intention of its creators. Rather than being molded into the image of the *modern* promoted by the creators of the space, occupants of the new space created unintended uses of the space and often evaded attempts at control and surveillance.[425] Thus, in response to the state's imposition of what Michel de Certeau called a "strategy" for control, ordinary occupants of the urban space responded with the de Certeauian "tactic," an action taken by the weak to win a temporary advantage in a space over which they had no control.[426]

Recent scholarship on culture and railway technology has also demonstrated how various social groups contested over such issues as the definition of and access to the railway space in other historical contexts. For instance, in the context of Porfirio Diaz's authoritarian modernization that followed a period of disorder, the late-nineteenth century

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424 I use the term "public space" in a broad sense to mean "space to which all citizens are granted some legal rights of access." It includes everything from sidewalks and parks to shopping malls, theaters, and public transportation facilities. See Andrew Light and Jonathan M. Smith, "Introduction: Geography, Philosophy, and Public Space," in Light and Smith eds., *The Production of Public Space* (Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), 3.

425 For example, Farha Ghannam, *Remaking the Modern: Space, Relocation, and the Politics of Identity in a Global Cairo* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2002) and Di Wang, *Street Culture in Chengdu: Public Space, Urban Commoners, and Local Politics, 1870-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

426 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 36-37.

Mexican middle class used the print media to share an image of themselves as the "vanguards of modern life" against what they perceived as the backward behavior of provincial populations, and thus consolidated their urban middle-class identity.[427] In colonial India, the middle-class male colonial subjects, who were excluded from the first-class cars reserved for European passengers, demanded the hierarchical differentiation among Indian passengers as well as the separation of respectable Indian women from the public gaze and asserted their position in the colonial hierarchy.[428] In both cases, rather than creating a homogeneous experience of railway journeys, the railway space revealed and fostered social differentiation.

In line with these studies of the railway space, this chapter examines how Iranians imagined and experienced railway journeys and the railway space in the second quarter of the twentieth century. By extension, it investigates how their imaginations and experiences impacted their understandings of the self. The first part of the chapter discusses the broader context of Iran's transport revolution and cultural changes in the early Pahlavi period. The second part examines the discursive construction of the railway traveler prototype prior to the opening of the Trans-Iranian Railway. The last part looks

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427 Michael Matthews, *The Civilizing Machine: A Cultural History of Mexican Railroads, 1876-1910* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2013).

428 For recent scholarship on India, Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), particularly Chapter Three, Laura Bear, *Lines of the Nation: Indian Railway Workers, Bureaucracy, and the Intimate Historical Self* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), Marian Aguiar, *Tracking Modernity: India's Railway and the Culture of Mobility* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), and Ritika Prasad, *Tracking Modernity: The Experience of Railways in Colonial India, 1853-1947* (Ph.D. diss. University of California, Los Angeles, 2009).

at various uses of the railway space after the construction of the Trans-Iranian Railway. I argue that, despite the desire of Iranian modernists to create a homogeneous nation through the Trans-Iranian Railway, the railway space came to embody the heterogeneity of Iranian society, which was divided by multiple factors. Consequently, modern middle-class occupants of the space simultaneously identified with and distanced themselves from other occupants of the railway space, and thus formed both national and class identities.

Taming the Danger of Mobility

In 1925-26, *Khalq* printed a newspaper serial novel called "The True Dream (*roʾya-ye sadeqeh*)." The serial took the form of an imagined travelogue set ten years in the future by an Iranian who came back to his homeland after a decade in Europe. It showcased the optimism widely shared among the emerging modern middle class at the beginning of Pahlavi rule. The story began with the protagonist traveling on a ship from Baku to Bandar-e Pahlavi on the way back from Europe to Iran. On the deck, he witnessed young Iranian students dressed in European clothing behaving graciously just like European passengers. The sight of the youths reminded the protagonist of his experience a decade earlier when he left for Europe on the same ship. In that previous trip, he had seen Gilani and Mazandarani pilgrims who looked ludicrous with dyed beards, long hair, and sangria-colored fingertips. They felt so at home on the deck that they even spread the customary Iranian *sofreh*, a "table cloth" spread out on the floor during meals on which to place

food, and started to eat lunch there.[429] The contrast between these pilgrims of the 1920s and the students of the 1930s reassured the protagonist of Iran's progress during the first decade of Reza Shah's rule.

Throughout the novel, the narrative evoked an image of Iran as a prosperous Europeanized country, with symbols of industrialization such as factories, dams, and port facilities appearing in front of the protagonist's eyes as he toured around cities by train and car. More than anything else, the railway epitomized the progress of Iran, as its existence gave the protagonist the mobility to tour throughout Iran speedily and witness signs of progress. After touring around Gilan, the protagonist took the electrified train from Rasht to Qazvin for sightseeing. He was impressed by the facilities of the railway, including magnificent railway stations, a sanitary restaurant, and food cars on the train.[430] Once the train departed Rasht Station, he enjoyed the panoramic views of the Iranian countryside, which used to be arid and uncultivated but which were now marked by pasture and fertile farms where mechanized agriculture was practiced, two-story houses, and new roads that connected the villages to the railway line. Instead of donkeys, mules, and camels, carts and cars ran through the new roads to transport village products such as fruits and vegetables to railway stations, from which they were taken to food processing factories as well as both domestic and international centers of consumption.[431] Thus, the

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[429] "Roʾya-ye Sadeqeh: Pas az Dah Sal, 1," *Khalq*, 16 December, 1925.
[430] "Roʾya-ye Sadeqeh: Pas az Dah Sal, 9," *Khalq*, 12 January, 1926, and "Roʾya-ye Sadeqeh: Pas az Dah Sal, 14," *Khalq*, 16 February, 1926.
[431] "Roʾya-ye Sadeqeh: Pas az Dah Sal, 8," *Khalq*, 9 January, 1926, "Roʾya-ye Sadeqeh: Pas az Dah Sal, 9," *Khalq*, 12 January, 1926, "Roʾya-ye Sadeqeh: Pas az Dah Sal, 10,"

railway was portrayed as a crucial vehicle that connected the Iranian countryside to the national economy, and to the global capitalist economy.

Even more impressive to the protagonist was the cultural transformation exemplified in the behavior of his compatriots. During his ten years of absence from Iran, Iranians embraced European cultural institutions such as cafes, restaurants, cinemas, and theme parks, where men and women in European-style clothing mingled with each other during their leisure time.[432] Notably, the cultural transformation of Iranians manifested itself in their behavior in the railway space. No one engaged in disorderly conduct or talked too loudly.[433] The orderly behavior of passengers was matched by the behavior of child peddlers at Qazvin Station. These children, who used to be naked beggars, were now dressed in clean uniforms, surrounded the train cars, and sold souvenirs like textiles as well as food and drinks, to passengers.[434] Thus, in this fictional account of Iran's near future, nothing reflected Iranian local customs except for the souvenirs. The transformed Iranian culture and the railway journey that took place within that cultural milieu reproduced how European travelers were imagined to experience a railway journey in first-class railway cars. In this imagination, undisrupted orderliness governed the railway

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Khalq, 16 January, 1926, "Roʾya-ye Sadeqeh: Pas az Dah Sal, 11," *Khalq*, 31 January, 1926, and "Roʾya-ye Sadeqeh Pas az Dah Sal, 12," *Khalq*, 2 February, 1926.

[432] "Roʾya-ye Sadeqeh: Pas az Dah Sal, 4," *Khalq*, 22 December, 1925, and "Roʾya-ye Sadeqeh: Pas az Dah Sal, 7," *Khalq*, 5 January, 1926.

[433] "Roʾya-ye Sadeqeh: Pas az Dah Sal, 9."

[434] "Roʾya-ye Sadeqeh: Pas az Dah Sal, 14."

space, epitomizing what Michel de Certeau called "a perfect actualization of the rational utopia."[435]

The serial novel encapsulated modernists' desire for a transformation of Iranian society, which, in their view, urgently needed a radical break from its immediate past. In reality, however, the transformation was more of a gradual process that straddled the late Qajar and early Pahlavi periods.[436] Of particular relevance to the railway space was the emergence of other new public spaces. As the serial novel depicted, new public spaces, including places that gave access primarily to paying customers such as cinemas and cafes, were becoming an integral part of the urban landscape in late Qajar and early Pahlavi Iran.[437] At the same time, the spatial structure of Iranian cities changed. New paved streets flanked by tree-lined sidewalks such as Pahlavi Street, which connected the city with Tehran Railway Station in the southern outskirts, extended from new squares that gradually replaced old city gates.[438]

Concomitantly, the improvement of rural security and the rapid influx of motorized vehicles, especially American cars and trucks, changed how Iranians

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435 de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 111.

436 For instance, before the 1927 imposition of the Pahlavi hat and the 1936 decree of forced unveiling, some Iranian men started to adopt European sartorial culture in the late Qajar period, while their female counterparts started to wear thinner chadors. Houchang Chehabi, "Staging the Emperor's New Clothes: Dress Codes and Nation-Building under Reza Shah," *Iranian Studies* 26 (1993), 210, and "The Banning of the Veil and its Consequences," in Stephanie Cronin, ed., *The Making of Modern Iran: State and Society under Riza Shah, 1921-1941* (London: Curzon, 2003), 194-5.

437 For social life in late Qajar Tehran, Jaʿfar Shahri, *Tehran-e Qadim* (Tehran: Entesharat-e Moʿin, 1991).

438 Mina Marefat, *Building to Power: Architecture of Tehran, 1921-1941* (Ph.D. diss. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1988), 84.

experienced traveling in the 1920s and 30s. Within the city, especially in Tehran, such new modes of transportation as buses and taxis (including trucks and motorbikes) competed with existing modes of transport, such as donkeys, tramways, and horse-drawn carriages, and ameliorated the condition of intra-city movement for city dwellers. Reflecting these changes, by 1926, in Tehran alone, there were 564 personal automobiles, 432 taxis, 108 vehicles used by embassies, and 36 diplomatic cars.[439] Other data from 1930-31 noted the number of registered cars in Iran as 1,639 automobiles and 4,226 buses and trucks.[440]

Yet, the spatial change of urban centers and the increase of new modes of transport that occupied the space did not suffice to transform the nation to meet modernists' sensibilities. A more fundamental issue was to inculcate in the public an understanding of proper behavior in the public space. In some regards, more and more Iranians started to act in ways that satisfied modernists' expectations. For instance, in the 1910s, it was considered scandalous if a man and woman sat in the same horse-drawn carriage—even if they were married—the couple would be fined by the police for doing so.[441] By the late 1920s, the presence of a married couple in a horse carriage gradually became more acceptable.[442]

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439 "Ehsaʾiyeh: otumobil va do charkheh va sodur-e tasdiqnameh-ye ranandegan," *Ettelaʿat*, August 30, 1926.
440 "Vasayet-e naqliyeh va ʿeddeh-ye talafat," *Salnameh-ye Pars*, 1932-33: 101.
441 Mansureh Pirniya. *Khanom-e Vazir, Khaterat va Dastneveshtehha-ye Doctor Farrokhru Parsai, Nakhostin Zan-e Vazir-e Iran* (Potomac, MD: Mehr Iran Publishing Co., 2007), 14.
442 "Khelaf va Eʿmal-e Qabiheh," *Salnameh-ye Pars*, 1929-30, 87.

Nevertheless, the behavior of most Iranians in the public space did not meet modernist sensibilities in other regards. For instance, while modernists valued the cinema to educate the general population, they were frustrated with the behavior of the Iranian audiences at cinemas, such as starting fights and bringing small children.[443] Furthermore, new paved streets such as Sepah, Pahlavi, and Cheragh-e Barq in Tehran appeared more chaotic than orderly, as various modes of transport, including donkeys, horse-drawn carriages, cars, trucks, and buses, vied for their place along with pedestrians and unauthorized peddlers whose merchandise was spread all over the streets.[444] While fruit sellers spread their watermelons and other fruits, coffee houses spread their tables and benches, carpenters spread wood, car repairers spread broken cars, and others spread whatever they sold.[445]

Frustrated with the ubiquity of the "misuse" of the public space, Iranian modernists, using the burgeoning press, attempted to educate the population about proper behavior in different public spaces. An *Ettelaʿat* article concluded that people were unfamiliar with "social duties and responsibilities (*vazayef va takalif-e ejtemaʿi*)."[446] Thus, in addition to legal measures and the efforts of police departments and municipal

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443 Bianca Devos, "Engineering a Modern Society?," 276.

444 As an example of the dangerous traffic, a British botanist who visited Rasht in the 1930s noted that a policeman stood on a platform in the middle of the street to direct the traffic, which included "camels, donkeys, buses and lorries, as well as worried pedestrians." Alice Fullerton, *To Persia for Flowers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938), 21. Cyrus Schayegh has discussed some new modes of transport in the context of the promises and perils of technological modernity. Schayegh, *Who is Knowledgeable is Strong,* 95-103.

445 "Piyadehrow-ye Khiyaban," *Ettelaʿat*, August 6, 1933.

446 Ibid.

governments, it argued, Iran needed to educate people that "sidewalks were for the general public," not part of their stores or playgrounds.[447] Moreover, a series of illustrations printed in the 1930-31 issue of *Salnameh-ye Pars*, the official yearbook, discussed issues pertinent to urban traffic in an attempt to promote healthy and safe lifestyles to its readers. In addition to such issues as diet, exercise, smoking, drinking, and clothing, the illustrations promoted walking only on sidewalks and being punctual, because leaving home late could lead to moving hurriedly and anxiously. Another illustration cautioned against chasing after the bus when one missed it, since another one would come shortly.[448]

The issue of Iranians' behavior in public spaces became even more controversial when the Pahlavi state issued the 1936 decree for compulsory unveiling. The police stopped numerous horse-drawn carriages and cars to ensure women's observance of unveiling,[449] and official publications issued guidelines for proper behavior in gender-mixed public spaces. In its 1936-37 issue, for instance, *Salnameh-ye Pars* elaborated for forty pages on social etiquette for both men and women, specifying what to wear on various occasions such as dinner events and sporting events.[450] The articulated norm mostly followed examples of the upper strata of European societies. The article stipulated that during a trip, women should make sure to wear clean clothes and put on a coat with a

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447 Ibid.

448 See illustrations that start with the article "Baraye nejat-e atfal-e nowzad," *Salnameh-ye Pars*, 1930-31, 71-80.

449 Najafi and Jones. *Persia is My Heart*, 179.

450 "A'in-e zendegi-ye banovan," and "A'in-e raftar-e aqayan," *Salnameh-ye Pars*, 1936-37, 145-184.

dark color, a small hat like a beret, socks, gloves, and shoes without heels, while men should wear golf clothes with a coat.[451] Men were also required to sit to the left of women in cars and horse-drawn carriages to ensure that the women traveled on the safer pedestrian side of the roads.[452]

The article also elaborated on proper behavior for men and women in the public space of streets. Men were advised against eating, spitting, and talking and laughing too loudly with excessive hand gestures.[453] They were also advised to walk on the left side of a woman, engage in conversation with a female acquaintance only when she initiated it, and remove their right-hand glove when shaking hands with a woman.[454] A woman was to greet by tilting her head and continuing to go rather than engaging in a lengthy conversation. If they ran into close friends or needed to talk, they should shake hands regardless of the gender of the other party, but without removing their gloves.[455] Notably, the article provided an additional specification for women. They were advised to avoid walking down the streets unless they had a reason to do so, while such restrictions to excessive mobility did not apply to men.[456] Therefore, to recreate the gender-mixed urban public space in a way that resembled elite circles in European societies, articles like this attempted to inculcate proper ways of interacting with the opposite sex while functioning as a way to maintain control over women's mobility and sexuality.

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451 Ibid., 151 and 182.
452 Ibid., 183.
453 Ibid., 183.
454 Ibid.
455 Ibid., 156.
456 Ibid., 156 and 182.

In short, the issue of behaving properly in the public space was not just an issue of the appearance of orderliness. It was intimately intertwined with other sociocultural issues such as health and gender relations and would shape every aspect of modern life for Iranian citizens. For this reason, Iranian modernists at the beginning of the Pahlavi period considered it absolutely necessary to discipline the unruly populace and monitor the behavior of the occupants of the future railway space that would come into being soon, particularly given the centrality of the railway project as the symbol of national rejuvenation.

(Figure 6.1) A crowded bus in Tehran. Men and women in a crowded car. *Salnameh-ye Pars*, 1930-31, 80. The caption reads, "In societies, observing rules is necessary."

Constructing the Railway Traveler Prototype

When the Pahlavi Dynasty was established in 1925, the only public transportation that was akin to a railway in Tehran was the tramway system discussed in Chapter Two. Tehran had an eight-kilometer steam tramway to the shrine of Shah ʿAbd al-ʿAzim and four lines of horse-drawn tramways within the city, both of which were opened in the late 1880s by a Belgian company. Since the steam tramway's opening, despite its frequent accidents and the occasional protests triggered by them, it garnered much excitement among the population,[457] and "traveling on it was considered one of the most popular recreations."[458] Nevertheless, by the early Pahlavi period, Iranian modernists imagined the future Trans-Iranian Railway in contradistinction with the existing conditions in the Tehran tramway.

By the 1920s, as was the case with other public spaces, Iranian modernists were increasingly frustrated by the ubiquity of what they described as improper behavior in and around steam and horse-drawn tramway facilities. An expatriate Iranian even claimed that the horse-drawn tramway had replaced "the clothes and hats and the varicolored

457 Poets expressed this excitement through a poem in which women demanded their husbands purchase tramway tickets for them rather than such luxurious commodities as shiny scarves and sequined shoes. Yahya Aryanpur, *Az Saba ta Nima: Tarikh-e 150 Sal-e Adab-e Farsi. Vol. 2* (Tehran: Sherkat-e Sahami-ye Ketabha-ye Jibi, 1973), 156.

458 ʿAli Akbar Siyasi, *Gozaresh-e Yek Zendegi*. Vol. 1 (London: Paka Print LTD., 1988), 21. For an account that stresses oppositions to the tramway and its destruction by "fanatics" and "mobs," see Rustam Kharegat, *A Tourist Guide to Iran* (Bombay: G. Claridge & Co., Ltd., The Caxton Press, 1935), 62.

turbans" as the most serious harm to the prestige of Iran in Europe.[459] Iranian behavior around tramway facilities greatly deviated from the idealized image depicted in "The True Dream." Similar to the Indian colonial discourse, Iranian modernists' fears revolved around the display of religiosity and domesticity in the public space by the masses, which would subvert the orderliness of the space.[460] In contrast to the imagined railway passengers in European attire, most tramway passengers were pilgrims who boasted long beards and complete veiling, which led to a *Nahid* article's deploring, "God forbid! We get on the railway car with clothes for sitting in a palanquin, donkey, or mule!"[461] When these passengers arrived at the tramway station, they followed the gender segregation of station facilities. While they waited for the tram, they listened to female dervishes who attracted a large audience among local youths by reciting eulogies in praise of Ali and Hoseyn.[462] In addition, the tramway space was occupied by a swarm of beggars, including the blind, the crippled, and the deaf, unauthorized water sellers, dry-fruit sellers, and all sorts of peddlers who crammed into the station.[463] The ritualized wailing and begging of the poor became the audiovisual evidence of the perceived chaos in the

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459 An *Ettelaʿat* article from 1932 cited in Hamid Naficy, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema, Volume 1: The Artisanal Era, 1897-1941* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 159-160.

460 Aguiar, *Tracking Modernity*, 31-32.

461 "Ma ba Cheh Lebas Mashin Savari Mikonim?" *Nahid*, 1 March, 1927.

462 ʿAbd al-Rahim Jaʿfari, *Dar Josteju-ye Sobh: Khaterat-e ʿAbd al-Rahim Jaʿfari, Bonyangozar-e Entesharat-e Amir Kabir* (Tehran: Ruzbahan, 2003), 100-101, and Shahri, *Tehran-e Qadim, Jeld-e Avval*, 337-344.

463 "Yek Mosaferat beh Vasileh-ye Teren," *Ettelaʿat*, 8 April, 1928.

Tehran tramway. If this crowd bore any resemblance to anything European, as one writer put it to describe the chaotic situation, it was to "a tribe of strikers in London."[464]

The tramways manifested other signs of Iran's past through patterns of consumption. Instead of eating continental breakfast before getting onboard, Iranian passengers ate the traditional dish of *kaleh pacheh* (sheep's head stew). Instead of smoking cigarettes, Iranian passengers waited for the train sitting by the rail while smoking long pipes (*chopoq*).[465] Furthermore, rather than bags and packages, tramway passengers carried onboard commodities that reflected their domestic lives, such as samovars, water pitchers (*aftabeh*), and a carrying pole with an earthen jar or jug on one end, and the *sofreh*, making Tehran tramcars visibly dissimilar to European ones.[466] Collectively, these commodities made the non-Europeanized cultural orientations of Iranians painstakingly visible.

Chaos reigned inside the tramcars, just like the stations (Figure 6.2). Instead of sitting comfortably, Iranian passengers, even those with first-class tickets, were crammed into a crowded car, where one either had to stand on the running board and hug the pole firmly to avoid falling off the train, or sit on a seated passenger.[467] When passengers finally managed to sit, they started to eat seeds and spit out their shells, creating a carpet of seed shells on the floors of the trains. Then, each time the train stopped, whether at a station or due to one of the frequent derailing incidents, new passengers invaded the car

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464 "Mosaferat-e Chand Saʿateh," *Khalq*, 22 May, 1926.
465 Ibid.
466 Ibid., and "Ma ba Cheh Lebas Mashin Savari Mikonim?"
467 "Yek Mosaferat beh Vasileh-ye Teren."

as they pushed each other, resuming the chaotic process of settling down in the tramway cars.[468]

Local youths further exacerbated the chaotic situation. Whenever the tram departed the station, groups of men climbed up the windows and kept hanging onto the tramcar, which occasionally resulted in accidents and serious, even fatal, injuries. Despite the presence of ticket inspectors and police officers who attempted to remove the troublesome youths from the tramcars, the youths learned to disguise themselves as passengers. Consequently, they continued to use the entire tramway space as their playground, sometimes playing tag and crawling between other passengers' legs and under women's chadors.[469] In view of such behavior, modernists saw no resemblance between traveling by Tehran tramways and their imagination of a European railway journey.

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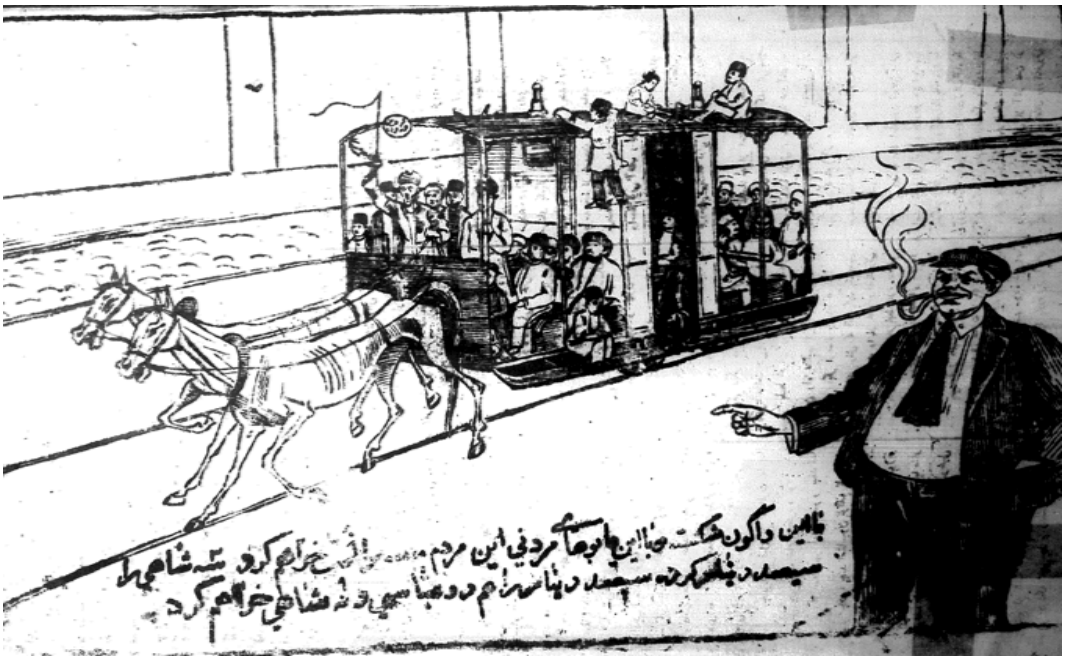
[468] Ibid., and "Mosaferat-e Chand Saʿateh."

[469] Shahri, *Tehran-e Qadim, Jeld-e Avval*, pp. 325-336, and Jaʿfari, *Dar Jostehju-ye Sobh*, 101-102.



(Figure 6.2) The Tehran horse-drawn tramway in the 1920s. Satirizing the journey on the crowded horse-drawn tramway in Tehran. *Khalq*, May 22, 1926. The dark middle-section is reserved for female passengers.

(Figure 6.3) The Shah ʿAbd al-ʿAzim tramway in the 1930s. The train was stopping in an open space to pick up passengers. With the permission of COWI Archives. Album F57B, 37.

The conundrum for modernists lay in the expected entry of these populations into the railway space once the Trans-Iranian Railway opened, because unlike the local tramways, the nation's prestige hinged upon the national railway that would connect northern and southern Iran via Tehran. On the one hand, the railway was supposed to foster traveling and spread what modernists called "the New Civilization (*tamaddon-e jadid*)," including national consciousness, to create a homogeneous nation. So the entry of more Iranians as traveling citizens should have been welcomed. On the other hand, the increased mobility of the ignorant masses and their entry into the railway space was believed to jeopardize the ideal orderliness of the railway space unless their behavior was regulated and disciplined. To Iranian modernists, reminiscences of the past and perceived disorderliness manifested in the masses' behavior seemed to corrupt the vehicle of modernity from within and undermine the project of successfully propagating "civilization." Thus, without reforming the masses of future passengers, they argued, the Trans-Iranian Railway would fail to bring progress to Iran.

The solution was to construct the image of the railway traveler prototype as a model that potential railway passengers would emulate. The process of constructing the prototype occurred in the Iranian press, which dramatically increased circulation as modern education expanded and raised the literacy rate in the early Pahlavi period. Nevertheless, the propagation of the railway traveler prototype was never intended to reach the ignorant masses, the stated target of reform. Rather, it was meant to ignite fear among the emerging modern middle class, who comprised the majority of Iranian

newspaper readers. The fear was intended to convince them to take action: traveling to enlighten the masses. Thus, the internalization of the values embedded in the railway traveler prototype, including the proper behavioral code in the railway space, functioned as a marker of difference for the emerging Iranian modern middle class to separate themselves from the masses whom they considered ignorant.[470]

In the early Pahlavi period, journalists such as *Nahid*'s Ibrahim Nahid and *Ettelaʿat*'s Abbas Masʿudi enjoyed the privilege of traveling on the new portions of the railway and highways *before* inauguration, often as part of the royal retinue in order to witness, record, and propagate the supposed progress achieved by Reza Shah. The frequency with which travel experiences were printed increased, especially during the 1930s. In this decade, the Trans-Iranian Railway, along with new highways, was opened portion by portion from both the northern and southern termini, waiting to be connected in central Iran. Combined with travel accounts presumably sent by readers, so many accounts of railway journeys appeared in newspapers that it was as if the nineteenth century trend of writing travelogues (*safarnāmeh*) had been revived on the pages of twentieth-century newspapers.[471] In this sense, through the practice of newspaper

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470 For subject formation through scientific knowledge, see Cyrus Schayegh, *Who is Knowledgeable is Strong*, and "Sport, Health, and the Iranian Modern Middle Class in the 1920s and 1930s," *Iranian Studies* 35 (2002): 341-370. For the ambivalent feelings among leftist intellectuals toward the masses, see Farzin Vejdani, "Appropriating the Masses: Folklore Studies, Ethnography, and Interwar Iranian Nationalism," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44 (2012): 507-526.

471 For examples of such travelogues, see a series of *Ettelaʿat* articles published in 1937-38 along the railway route from Tehran, Qum, Borujerd, Salehabad (Andimeshk), and Ahvaz. "Dar Rah-e Qum," *Ettelaʿat*, 22 October, 1936," "Dar ʿAraq," *Ettelaʿat*, 2 November, 1936, "Dar Ahvaz," *Ettelaʿat*, 25 December, 1936, "Dar Salehabad,"

reading, along with witnessing railway facilities and participating in official events to celebrate the progress of construction,[472] imagining a railway journey became embedded in the everyday life of the modern middle class.

In addition to specifying proper behavior in the railway space, and thus defining the de Certeauian strategy that should be taken by the future Iranian State Railway, these writings printed in the Iranian press shared a pedantic goal of explaining why Iranians needed to travel. The railway traveler prototype was not a pilgrim. Rather, he was a tourist who traveled around his homeland. As one journalist noted, "when the Shah does not sit behind the curtain, princes, ministers, prominent political and military figures, journalists, and even ordinary citizens should not sit behind the curtain. They should learn closely with their eyes and ears open about the present and past conditions of the country. Namely, they should go to see all the places in the country."[473] Traveling would also allow Iranians to "blend and mix (*ekhtilat va amizesh*)."[474] As more Iranians traveled

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Ettelaʿat, 27 December, 1936, and "Dar Ahvaz," *Ettelaʿat*, 6 January, 1937. The official yearbook *Salnameh-ye Pars* also ran long articles. For example, see "Rah Ahan," *Salnameh-ye Pars* (1935-1936): 223-234, and "Mazandaran va Gilan ya Zarristan-e Iran," *Salnameh-ye Pars* (1936-1937): 13-102.

472 For instance, residents of Sari flocked to the new station to see the bathrooms of the first-class carriage. IOR/L/PS/12/3409, "Persia: Memorandum of the Commercial Secretary on the Northern Section of the Trans-Persian Railway, May 16, 1931." For press coverage of celebrations, "Jashn-e Vosul-e Rah Ahan beh Varamin," *Ettelaʿat*, 31 December, 1936, "Jashn-e Rah Ahan dar Hazrat-e ʿAbd al-ʿAzim," *Ettelaʿat*, 30 January, 1937, and "Gozaresh-e Jashn-e Goshayesh-e Rah Ahan-e Shomal," *Ettelaʿat*, 20 February, 1937. Schoolchildren and civil servants were often asked to participate in the official celebrations. Najafi, *Persia is My Heart*, 52-3, and Judith McComb, "Annual Report of Nurbakhsh School, 1938-1939," Presbyterian Historical Society, RG91/20/12.

473 "Mazandaran 10," *Ettelaʿat*, 23 August, 1933.

474 "Yek Hafteh dar Kenar-e Darya 2," *Ettelaʿat*, 1 July, 1933, and "Mosaferat-e Mazandaran," *Ettelaʿat*, 10 August, 1933.

and mingled with those from other provinces, they would familiarize themselves with the ways of life elsewhere in Iran as well as different regions and customs. Such a transformation would be beneficial "both for individuals and the country," and the interactions among Iranians would have positive impacts on "commerce, industry, agriculture, ethics, and public behavior."[475] Therefore, journalistic travel accounts did not simply introduce conditions and customs of faraway provinces to their readers. Rather, by providing vicarious experiences in the provinces, they were meant to serve as inspirations for future travelers on how to travel around Iran by train. They encouraged newspaper-reading citizens to prepare for their own journeys and foster a national consciousness through direct interactions with their compatriots in destinations. In turn, local populations in the destinations would be exposed to ideas and customs of their more civilized compatriots. In other words, the railway traveler prototype would be a missionary of civilization, spreading "civilized" customs in the railway space and inculcating nationalism across Iran.

The Spatial Politics of the Trans-Iranian Railway

Within a decade of the 1938 completion of the Trans-Iranian Railway, additional lines to connect Tehran with Tabriz in the northwest and Mashhad in the northeast had started to operate in limited sections. Another line to connect Tehran to Yazd in the southeast via

475 Ibid.

Qom was also under construction.[476] As the network expanded, the railway space began to intersect with a larger number of Iranians' lives. As previous chapters have discussed, many landowners resented the damages that the railway caused to their agricultural lands, or even worse, the confiscation of lands. Some local villagers took advantage of the economic opportunities and flocked to the new stations to sell their products to travelers or opened inns by the stations.[477] For many others, the railway became a fundamental means for intercity travel, be it as a part of their daily routine to move from one village to another, or as a special occasion such as pilgrimage and vacation. Despite the general trend of motorization, the railway continued to function as a common mode of transport in Iran partly because of the Allied occupation.

As discussed in previous chapters, when the Allied forces invaded Iran in 1941, they took control over transportation routes from the Persian Gulf to the Soviet Union, including the Trans-Iranian Railway, which foreign workers such as Indians, the British, and later Americans, started to operate in order to transport war materials to the Soviet Union. During the occupation, the civilian use of highways and railways became restricted. For instance, before the war, the southern line from Tehran to Ahvaz operated four trains per week in each direction, with a capacity of 320 individuals on each train.

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476 In 1942, the Tehran-Miyaneh Line in the northwest and the Tehran-Shahrud Line in the northeast opened. Malakuti, *Rah Ahan-e Iran*, 160.

477 For land disputes, see ML10/175/25/1/47, 11/205/11/1/8, 12/28/3/1/10, and 13/147/15/1/190. For opportunities for locals, ʿAla al-Din Mirmirani, *Kureh Rahi dar Ghobar: Khaterat-e Safar-e Yeki az Aʿza-ye Hezb-e Tudeh beh Showravi* (Tehran: Entesharat-e Neda-ye Farhang, 1998), 8-9, and Mahmud Daneshvar, *Didaniha va Shenidaniha-ye Iran* (Tehran: Donya-ye Ketab, 2009), 15-17.

Once the occupation started, 140 seats were allocated to Allied passengers for each service, and two additional services commenced specifically for Allied military personnel.[478] Thus, capacity for railway passenger traffic was reduced almost by half. Furthermore, motor transport simply became unaffordable during the occupation. The gradual depletion of tires and other parts necessary to maintain roadworthiness led to the lack of motorized vehicles in Iran, as a consequence of which the fare for motor transport skyrocketed quickly while the railway fare remained relatively stable.[479] Though the impact of this factor was more obvious in freight traffic, it certainly contributed to the congestion of passenger traffic as well.

Statistics indicate that the reduction of capacity resulted in railway journeys of perpetual congestion. In the summer of 1945, the southern line had the capacity to carry 3,840 passengers per week, including Allied as well as Iranian government officials and military personnel but not including fourth-class roofed freight cars that were added to

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[478] "Saneheh-ye Istgah-e Markaz-e Garm: Shayeʿat-e Eghraqamiz Haqiqat Nadarad," *Mardan-e Ruz*, 4 July, 1945. An advertisement on *Mardan-e Ruz* six months before noted only one military train to Ahvaz per week. "Agahi az Taraf-e Bongah-e Rah Ahan-e Dowlati-ye Iran," *Mardan-e Ruz*, 31 January, 1945. The northern line from Tehran to Bandar-i Shah had three passenger services and three mixed services for the Allies and passengers with the additional fourth-class cars. Both the west line from Tehran to Zanjan and the east line from Tehran to Shahrud operated three services a week. "Agahi: Barnameh-ye Vorud va Khoruj."

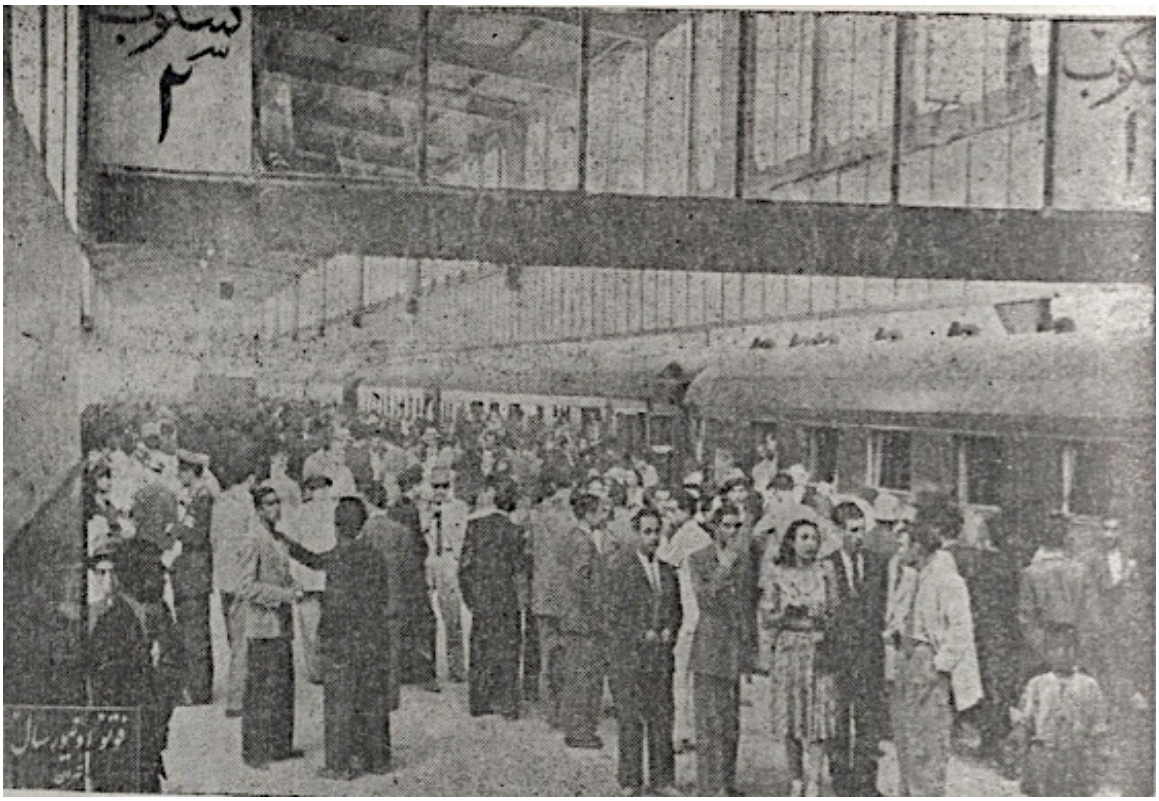
[479] Bongah-e Rah Ahan-e Dowlati-ye Iran, *Amar-e Sal-e 1322-1323*, 28-9. Nonetheless, though not as frequently as motorized vehicle fare, railway fare occasionally increased to meet the rapid inflation. For instance, the fare was doubled in September, 1943. See Bongah-e Rah Ahan-e Dowlati-ye Iran, *Gozaresh-e Natayej-e Mali-ye Hamkari-ye Bongah-e Rah Ahan-e Dowlati-ye Iran ba Mottafeqin Marbut beh Dowreh-ye Jang (*Tehran: Chapkhaneh-ye Bongah-e Rah Ahan, 1946), 10.

carry extra passengers.[480] Thus, the line theoretically had the capacity to carry 200,229 passengers annually. As the Table 6.1 shows, the southern line carried 197,026 passengers in 1944-45, excluding fourth-class passengers. Thus, railway traffic became a crucial means to maintain mobility for ordinary Iranians in the context of the Allied occupation.

Districts	1st Class	2nd Class	3rd Class	4th Class	Total	Excluding 4th Class
North	4	3,899	56,558	10,115	70,576	60,461
Tehran	2,020	22,226	135,003	165,280	324,529	159,249
Arak	51	3,727	46,202	35,579	85,559	49,980
South	1,229	3,479	192,258	54,321	251,347	197,026
Total	3,304	33,331	430,021	265,295	732,011	466,716

(Table 6.1) The number of passengers in 1323 (1944-45) in each class. Based on the table in *Amar-e Sal-e 1322-1323*, page 31. The numbers in the original table contained some minor errors and did not add up, but the gap does not exceed 1,000. The North District is from Bandar Shah to Firuz Kuh, the Tehran District is from Firuz Kuh to Qom, Garmsar to Shahrud, and Tehran to Miyaneh, the Arak District is from Qom to Dorud, and the South District is from Dorud to Bandar Shahpur and Ahvaz to Khorramshahr.

480 "Saneheh-ye istgah-e markaz-e garm: shaye'at-e eghraqamiz haqiqat nadarad."



(Figure 6.4) The platform for the north line at Tehran Station in the late 1940s. Malakuti, *Rah Ahan-e Iran*, p. 419. This photograph printed in the official publication that celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the beginning of construction may illustrate what modernists considered an adequate image for the normative experience of an Iranian railway station.

While the pace of motorization accelerated after the end of the occupation, rail travel continued to offer travelers a distinct experience by evoking a sense of national belonging among the occupants of the railway space, as ʿAla al-Din Mirmirani, an Iranian communist, recalled in his memoir. In 1948, he came to Tehran Station in order to leave Iran via the Caspian Sea region to enter the Soviet Union to join his comrades. Before getting onboard, he asked himself: "Where are you going? Aren't you one of these people? Didn't you grow up among these people? Why do you want to abandon all

your love of Iran?"[481] As he witnessed his compatriots saying farewell to each other on the platform in a familiar manner, and as he shared a compartment with his compatriots who offered him food (*taʿarof*) and chatted with one another, he felt that he was leaving the familiar world for an unknown utopia. Despite his determination to join his comrades, the railway space reminded Mirmirani of the national community, of which he imagined himself to be a member.

Although the railway space evoked a sense of national belonging to its occupants like Mirmirani, contrary to the homogeneous railway space of modernists' imagination, it embodied various divisions of the early-Pahlavi nationalist discourse and visualized them. Most obviously, in the railway space of the 1940s, the division between a small number of modern middle-class vacationers and the large presence of pious Muslims with visual markers of Iran's Islamic present became evident. This was particularly the case for the southern line, whereas the northern line, which included coastal resorts on the Caspian shore, had a comparatively higher proportion of vacationers. While third-class passengers included both local villagers and pilgrims, and occasionally vacationers who could not secure seats in first- or second-class cars, most fourth-class passengers were pilgrims who flocked to the Shiʿi shrine cities of Qom and the ʿAtabat in Iraq. The Iraqi shrine cities were accessible by combining automobile and rail trips after reaching Ahvaz in southwestern Iran by train. Therefore, similar to elsewhere in Asia and the Middle

481 Mirmirani, *Kureh Rahi dar Ghobar*, 6.

East, the Trans-Iranian Railway enabled mass pilgrimage,[482] as indicated by the fact that third- and fourth-class passengers comprised about ninety-five percent of railway passengers.[483]

Therefore, despite the modernist imagination of the railway space as exemplifying the Europeanized Iranian nation without any trace of the Islamic past, most occupants of the space did not actualize the railway traveler prototype. Rather, they were either villagers in local attire or pilgrims in religious attire, since the compulsory unveiling of women and the imposition of the "international hat" for men became irrelevant after the abdication of Reza Shah. The prominence of Shiʿi pilgrims in particular was reflected in the frequency of service, as special trains to Qom departed Tehran every Friday. Modernist travelers often noticed the visibility of religious attire in the railway space, as a Tehrani noted about the train to Ahvaz, "[p]assengers of this train are classified into three groups. There were many poverty-stricken, hungry people in shabby clothes going on a pilgrimage to Karbala. The second group was Hajjis and the wealthy on business trips under the pretext of pilgrimage. Others were government officials."[484] Thus, the railway

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482 In Iran's case, while pilgrimage to the ʿAtabat used to be largely seasonal to avoid summer heat in Iraq, pilgrims could visit the ʿAtabat by train throughout the year, although peak seasons required additional fourth-class cars. In other Asian and Middle Eastern contexts, too, pilgrimage traffic attracted a large number of passengers. For India, Aguiar, *Tracking Modernity*, 19. For Egypt, Barak, *On Time*, 87. For Japan, Tadashi Uda, *Tetsudo Nippon Bunkashiko* (Kyoto: Shibunkaku Shuppan, 2007), 191-197.

483 Vezarat-e Toroq, *Rah Ahan-e Sarasar-e Iran, 1306-1317*, 100. The percentage is based on Bongah-e Rah Ahan-e Dowlati-ye Iran, *Amar-e Sal-e 1322-1323*, 31.

484 Danishvar, *Didaniha*, 14-15.

space enabled modernists to perceive visually that pious and poor Shiʿis in third- and fourth-class cars comprised the majority of the national community.

The problem was that there were only about two hundred tickets per week available for these pilgrims after deducting the needs of prioritized passengers such as the Allied personnel, government officials, and other civilian passengers.[485] Consequently, many of these pilgrims traveled on roofed freight cars unequipped with such basic things as lights, heat, proper ventilation, and water. Due to the danger of traveling in freight cars, the Railway Organization requested the government to prevent pilgrimage by not issuing passports,[486] but the influx of pilgrims did not stop.

The practice of traveling by roofed freight cars existed during the Reza Shah era as well,[487] but with the reduced level of civilian passenger service, the demand for them increased. Tables 6.2 and 6.3 below indicate the lack of freight cars to carry pilgrims. In 1322 (1943-44), the number of passengers on fourth-class freight cars remained fairly low until the month of Dey. But during Shiʾi religious occasions such as ʿAshura (Dey 16) and Arbaʿin (Esfand 1), freight cars were brought to handle the additional traffic, which resulted in the surge of passengers in fourth-class cars. In 1323 (1944-45), the supply of freight cars generally remained steady throughout the year, but when additional freight cars arrived to carry the returning pilgrims in Bahman and Esfand, the number of

485 "Agahi az taraf-e bongah-e rah ahan-e dowlati-ye iran."
486 "Saneheh-ye istgah-e markaz-e garm: shayeʾat-e eghraqamiz haqiqat nadarad."
487 IOR/L/PS/12/3400/PZ4332. Khuzistan Diaries, No. 3, March 1937.

passengers increased.[488] Therefore, although the available data are limited, it seems that much of the pilgrimage traffic was dictated by the availability of cars. When more cars became available, passengers quickly filled the space, making the railway journey perpetually congested.

Nonetheless, given that the Railway Organization provided additional cars in anticipation of higher traffic during particular seasons, some speculative interpretations are possible. It appears that Iranian passengers preferred to travel in certain seasons, but the advent of railways may have alleviated the difficulties of traveling from cities like Tehran to the ʿAtabat and encouraged a more even distribution of pilgrimage traffic throughout the year. Before the Trans-Iranian Railway opened, the most common land route from Tehran to the ʿAtabat was through Hamadan, Kermanshah, and Khaneqin to Baghdad. In the late nineteenth century, most pilgrims left Iran in the fall to avoid the scorching heat of Iraq in the summer and returned to Iran by the spring, crossing the snowy mountains of western Iran. Thus, September and October were the peak months to cross the border to Iraq while other months had little traffic, with the difference between the peak and slack months occasionally reaching forty times.[489] In addition to the peak season in the fall to winter, Iranian pilgrims traveled in especially large numbers for

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488 According to Mardan-e Ruz, the Railway Organization added two wagons per week for pilgrims returning from Iraq and carried approximately 2,000 passengers by the first week of March, which corresponds to the Iranian month of Bahman and Esfand. See "Khabarha-ye rah ahan: morajeʿat-e zovvari ke baraye ziyarat ʿatabat rafteh budand," *Mardan-e Ruz*, March 7, 1945.

489 Tomoko Morikawa. *Shia-ha Seichi Sankei no Kenkyu (Shiʾite Pilgrimage to the Sacred ʿAtabat)* (Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 2007), 67-9.

important Shi'i events such as Ghadir Khom, ʿAshura, and Arbaʿin, although the distribution of various religious events throughout the year made pilgrimage valuable for Shi'is at any time of the year.[490]

With the advent of the railway, however, the flow of pilgrimage traffic seemingly went through some change. Pilgrims had a twenty-five hour ride on a train from Tehran to Ahvaz, followed by a two-hour car ride to Khorramshahr, and then to nearby Basra. From Basra, it took seventeen hours to Baghdad by the Iraqi railway. From Baghdad, Karbala was only about seventy kilometer away.[491] Thus, instead of persevering in the snow of western Iran or the heat of the Persian Gulf, pilgrims had to endure only two train rides for a little over forty hours and car rides for several hours, although the heat in the ʿAtabat was unavoidable if they traveled in the summer.

490 Ibid., 70.

491 The travel time is based on "Agahi: barnameh-ye vorud va khoruj-e qatarha-ye mosaferi az Tehran dar salha-ye 1323-24," and Arjomand. *Shesh Sal dar Darbar-e Pahlavi*, 262-6.

Month	1st Class	2nd Class	3rd Class	4th Class	Total
Farvardin	372	4,662	53,444	4,009	62,487
Ordibehesht	408	5,096	40,391	1,570	47,465
Khordad	379	3,934	39,238	1,501	45,052
Tir	362	3,177	37,822	2,796	44,157
Mordad	406	4,250	40,442	2,052	47,150
Shahrivar	381	3,039	37,323	1,780	42,523
Mehr	384	2,803	36,262	3,630	43,079
Aban	409	2,964	37,338	4,124	44,835
Azar	240	2,404	35,777	1,182	39,603
Dey	228	2,796	36,210	6,493	45,727
Bahman	811	4,229	41,291	7,754	54,085
Esfand	234	3,212	37,662	25,748	66,856
Total	4,614	42,566	473,200	62,639	583,019

(Table 6.2) The number of passengers in 1322 (1943-44), excluding railway employees and passengers who paid a half price (government officials and Iranian military personnel). Based on a table in *Amar-e Sal-e 1322-1323*, page 72. Minor errors in the original table are corrected by the author. The Iranian solar calendar generally starts on March 21 in the Gregorian calendar, and each month has either 30 or 31 days except in leap years. Thus, the month of Farvardin is usually from March 21 to April 20, Ordibehesht is from April 21 to May 21, and so forth.

Month	1st Class	2nd Class	3rd Class	4th Class	Total
Farvardin	732	5,784	47,791	14,759	69,066
Ordibehesht	208	2,741	40,927	11,198	55,074
Khordad	164	2,858	35,668	13,712	52,402
Tir	254	2,581	36,350	17,279	56,464
Mordad	221	2,938	41,271	17,856	62,286
Shahrivar	242	2,678	30,933	15,786	49,639
Mehr	257	2,559	38,141	17,486	58,443
Aban	250	2,420	32,243	17,575	52,488
Azar	244	2,450	30,146	16,957	49,797
Dey	237	1,645	27,207	15,425	44,514
Bahman	232	1,826	30,099	16,103	48,260
Esfand	248	2,348	30,921	20,113	53,630
Total	3,289	32,828	421,697	194,249	652,063

(Table 6.3) The number of passengers in 1323 (1944-45), excluding railway employees and passengers who paid a half price (government officials and Iranian military personnel). Based on *Amar-e Sal-e 1322-1323*, page 72. Errors in the original table are corrected by the author.

Tables 6.2 and 6.3 indicate that some months had more passengers. The months of Esfand, and even more, Farvardin, had more passengers probably because of family visitations for the Iranian New Year. The months of Mehr and Aban, which, during the two years under discussion, corresponded roughly to the traditional season to start pilgrimage, had a small increase in the number of passengers, especially in fourth-class cars. The slight lag may be explained by the much shorter duration of the journey with the railway. During these two months, the number of passengers leaving the Tehran District of the railway increased, especially in 1322, when 30,377 used the Tehran District in Mehr as compared to 19,242 on the previous month of Shahrivar.[492] Nevertheless, compared to the difference of forty times in the nineteenth century, the flow of passengers seemed largely steady throughout the year, unless it was mediated by such external factors as the supply of cars and other political or economic circumstances. With the limited evidence available, it appears that the supposed epitome of secular modernity probably increased the visibility of Iran's Islamic present in the public space throughout the year, side by side with vacationers, government officials, and foreign military personnel, hence the frequent references to pilgrims in various sources.

Aside from making visible the religious orientation of the majority of passengers, the railway space visualized the economic divide in Iranian society. While such potentially disruptive elements as communist-newspaper sellers were prohibited in railway stations, beggars, whose presence increased since the occupation, were excluded

492 Bongah-e Rah Ahan-e Dowlati-ye Iran. *Amar-e Sal-e 1322-1323*, 73.

from the trains and occupied a marginalized position outside the windows of the trains.[493] Yet, beggars remained a highly visible group in the railway space for travelers because of their presence on the platforms. On a ski trip to northwestern Iran in the late 1940s, Najmeh Najafi witnessed beggars, mostly children, who "had descended upon the platform like a swarm of locusts" at every station along the route to her destination.[494] Likewise, another traveler noticed "barefooted people with their children on both sides of the train," collecting the food that passengers threw out of the window onto the platform in the southwestern province of Lorestan, which, as discussed in Chapter Four, was hit hard economically after the end of railway construction.[495] Thus, similar to the porousness of the public space of new boulevards in Haussmannized Paris that David Harvey discusses, the railway space of mid-twentieth century Iran was very porous.[496] While inside the trains was theoretically reserved for paying passengers, right outside of them existed platforms, which were often unpatrolled by the gendarmerie in the provinces, allowing destitute beggars to wait for passenger trains, and thus making themselves highly visible to passengers. Their visibility revealed the hierarchically divided Iranian society.

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493 The gendarmerie patrolled to expel from Tehran Station newspaper sellers who sold such Tudeh-Party publications as *Rahbar* and *Zafar* as well as *Mardom* and *Neda-ye Haqiqat*. "Jelowgiri az Forush-e Ruznamehha-ye Azadikhah," *Zafar*, 1 March, 1946.

494 Najafi, *Persia is My Heart*, 143.

495 Daneshvar, *Didaniha*, 13.

496 David Harvey, "The Political Economy of Public Space," in Setha Low and Neil Smith, eds., *The Politics of Public Space* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), 17-34.

Beggars were not the only group that experienced exclusion from the railway space. Many local populations along the route had to endure exclusion that stemmed from the unavailability of tickets for civilian passengers during the occupation.[497] Disorder often occurred at ticket offices in railway stations as passengers swarmed to obtain tickets. The swarm was a natural consequence of the policy to start the sale of fourth-class tickets, the most sought-after tickets among the poor, only one day prior to departure at stations on the route.[498] Travelers became increasingly frustrated with the limited number of tickets. The problem of the restriction on ticket sales became particularly obvious among pilgrims who used the Iraqi railway from Basra to reach the ʿAtabat via Baghdad. Since the Iraqi railway did not restrict ticket sales, they demanded that the Iranian State Railway do the same. Otherwise, they just needed to rely on the thriving black market to obtain tickets.[499]

One example of complaints about the unavailability of tickets and the subsequent impossibility of travel came from the residents of Firuzkuh, a county between Tehran and the Caspian Sea. In 1945, residents of Firuzkuh filed a petition to the general manager of the Iranian State Railway, protesting about the imposition of a hefty fine for fare evasion,

497 The difficulty of getting tickets for Iranian passengers is noted in "Doshvariha-ye Bongah-e Rah Ahan," *Mardan-e Ruz*, 10 January, 1945, "Agahi az Taraf-e Bongah-e Rah Ahan,"

498 "Agahi," *Mardan-e Ruz*, 21 March, 1945.

499 "Rah Ahan ra Bayad baraye Reqabatha-ye Eqtesadi-ye Zaman-i Solh Amadeh Kard," *Mardan-e Ruz*, 20 May, 1945, and Bongah-e Rah Ahan-e Dowlati-ye Iran, *Amar-e Sal-e 1322-1323*, 29.

which was quadruple the original fare.[500] The petitioners explicitly attributed the petty crime of fare evasion to the unavailability of train tickets in the area, pointing out that Firuzkuh Station should sell at least twenty tickets daily considering that, in addition to visitors, 30,000 residents in the forty-six villages of Firuzkuh needed to travel. Yet, only four tickets were allocated to the station, and for some unexplained reasons, even those four tickets had occasionally not been sold, forcing local residents to travel without tickets.[501] Therefore, according to this reasoning, fare evasion was a de Certeauian tactic that the weak used because they had no control over the rules that governed the railway space. Such actions as swarming to ticket offices and petitioning visualized the exclusion of many ordinary civilians from the benefit of the mobility that the railway promised to bring.

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500 Fare evasion was extremely common. For instance, in one instance, over forty passengers out of two hundred reportedly were ticketless freeloaders. "Tafsil-e Hadeseh-ye Asafnak-e Rah Ahan," *Ettelaʿat*, 21 June, 1945.

501 ML14/176/18/1/263.

(Figure 6.5) A cartoon satirizing fare evasion. *Mardan-e Ruz*, February 7, 1945. The cartoon was printed with the caption that read, "Does one person have to show several tickets?" The cartoon may indicate that the prevalence of fare evasion was common knowledge.

Along with other violations of regulations, fare evasion was only one of the many concerns that the Iranian State Railway held with regard to the behavior of the occupants of the railway space.[502] The concern itself was not new, since as discussed earlier, modernist journalists criticized the disorderly behavior in the tramway space at the beginning of the Pahlavi period. By the late 1930s, however, reflecting the expansion of

502 "Agahi: Jarimeh-ye Mosaferin-e bedun-e Belit," *Mardan-e Ruz*, 31 January, 1945, and "Tafsil-e Hadeseh-ye Asafnak-e Rah Ahan."

state power, the Iranian State Railway and its publications started to play a larger role in enforcing the de Certeauian strategy as codified regulations, implementing modernists' demands from over a decade ago. The repeated appearances of these regulations in publications and the existence of witness accounts of disorderly behavior and petty crimes indicated not only the failure of the Iranian State Railway to regulate the space but also the heightened anxiety shared among modernists about the nature of the national community embodied in the railway space.

For instance, in 1940, the gazette of the Iranian State Railway printed an article entitled "Duties of Railway Travelers (*vazifeh-ye mosaferin-e rah ahan*)" and urged passengers to use railway facilities properly. In addition to raising such issues as malfunctioning equipment because of inattention, it criticized passengers for bringing prohibited items into passenger cars rather than checking them to be transported in a separate car.[503] Despite the luggage regulations, passengers continued to break rules.[504] For instance, one passenger hid headless geese, which were prohibited in the regulations, in his package, an approved kind of luggage, and put it on the luggage rack above his seat. Shortly after the departure, blood started to drip over other passengers, making a carpet of blood on the floor.[505] Likewise, Mazandarani passengers came onboard with

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503 "Vazifeh-ye Mosaferin-e Rah Ahan," *Nameh-ye Rah*, 1:1 (May 1940), 27.

504 The regulations allowed each passenger to carry thirty kilograms of suitcases, bags, and small packages alone and prohibited bringing items that would exacerbate congestion, meaning such items as samovars and long carrying poles that tramway passengers often carried. Bongah-e Rah Ahan-e Dowlati-ye Iran, *Amar-e Sal-e 1322-1323*, 31.

505 Vazifeh-ye Mosaferin-e Rah Ahan," 27.

baskets of lettuce and oranges rather than checking these items and transporting them in a separate car as required by the regulations.[506] Since railway employees were known for their susceptibility to bribery, passengers who were caught while freeloading or bringing prohibited item often tried to negotiate with them, or even bribe them, to avoid penalty fees.[507] Importantly, the article argued for the proper use of the railway space by likening the national railway to one's house, because just like Iranians owned their houses, they owned the railway built by the state with their money. Then, it concluded by urging those who considered themselves more civilized to set examples for other passengers and make themselves, and Iran, worthy of railways.[508] Therefore, by stressing the high visibility of disorderly conduct and the value of the railway as a national asset, the article tried to remind its modern middle-class readers of their need to continue the civilizing mission as railway travelers and reform the nature of the railway space, the embodiment of the nation.

The visibility of undesirable elements in the railway space also affected individual modern middle-class travelers, usually tourists and vacationers, as the case of Mahmud

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506 Ibid.

507 Passengers often bribed employees of the Iranian State Railway, including conductors and railway policemen. For instance, rather than purchasing a ticket for a second-class seat from Tehran to Ahvaz, which was 410 rial in 1945, passengers could bribe the conductor for 350 rial and sit in a second-class seat. Because this practice was fairly common, it was well-known that "whenever a train goes to and from Ahvaz, a considerable amount of money goes to railway employees, and perhaps their profit was not smaller than that of the Railway Organization itself." For the official fare as of April 1945, see "Agahi: Baha-ye Belitha-ye Mosaferi-ye Istgahha-ye Mohem," *Mardan-e Ruz*, April 25, 1945. For the anecdote, see Arjomand, *Shesh Sal*, 261-2.

508 "Vazifeh-ye Mosaferin-e Rah Ahan," 29.

Daneshvar, a former office worker from Tehran, illustrates. In late 1945, he started his two-year journey across Iran by catching a southbound train from Tehran. He had numerous encounters in the railway space that ultimately helped his journey's goal of getting to know his compatriots (*hammihanan-e ʿaziz*).[509] When he got on the train, he immediately spotted a womanizer who slyly tried to keep the seats around him so that he could offer them only to well-dressed women. Then he saw a freeloader who was hiding in the bathroom to avoid ticket inspection. When he was caught, he bribed the police. Moreover, in the compartment, he found traces of theft since lamps, knobs, and drawers were missing, which made him uneasy because of the disgrace such a scene in the national railway space would make for Iran's reputation among foreign visitors. When he witnessed beggars on the platforms, he unsympathetically compared them to monkeys in India that were fed by railway passengers. At Andimeshk Station in Khuzestan, he got off the train and talked to a porter. The porter asked him whether he was a northerner, which dumbfounded him since such words as northerner or southerner meant nothing form him, who identified himself only as Iranian.[510] Such encounters in the railway space frustrated him because of other Iranians' perceived failure to use the space properly and embrace the Iranian national identity. At the same time, the encounters strengthened his sense of national duty and convinced him of the urgent need to complete his mission of traveling all around Iran and spreading civilization and nationalism. In short, his experience in the

509 Daneshvar, *Didaniha*, 8.
510 Ibid., 11-16.

railway space simultaneously strengthened his sense of national belonging and his understanding of the difference between himself and his compatriots.

Of course, not all travelers reacted the same way. Disgusted with another wealthy female tourist's negative reaction to beggars, Najmeh Najafi compassionately gave coins to beggars on platforms and repeatedly visited impoverished Turkish-speaking villages in the northwest to learn about their life and language.[511] Therefore, there was a differentiation within modern middle-class railway travelers. Nevertheless, regardless of how they reacted, modern middle-class railway travelers reinforced their sense of national belonging while becoming acutely aware of their economic and cultural differences from other segments of Iranian society.

Over the next two years, traveling at his own expense, Daneshvar visited not only areas accessible by train but also areas that he had to visit by car, donkey, or camel. Motivated by the zeal to inform his fellow Iranians of the historical heritage of their glorious homeland, he meticulously recorded what he saw along the way, from historical sites to natural surroundings, local customs, and even the reality of overwhelming poverty in cities and the countryside alike. In addition to recording his journey in writing, he also tried to convince locals that they were Iranians, not Dezfulis, Arabs, or Ajams, planted the Iranian tricolor flag at the apexes of such remote mountains as Kuh-e Taftan in Baluchistan and Sabalan in Azarbayjan and left graffiti on the walls of such caves as

511 Najafi, *Persia is My Heart*, 148-157.

Darband in Semnan.[512] Therefore, the visibility of divisions and exclusions in the railway space had the dual effects on the modern middle class to identify with other occupants of the space as their compatriot Iranians and to differentiate themselves from the rest of the national community that needed civilizing guidance from them. The discourse of the railway before 1938 created railway travelers like Daneshvar, who came to embody the railway traveler prototype in the 1940s. In turn, for the new railway travelers, the presence of heterogeneous groups of Iranians within the confined railway space after 1938 concretized the object of the civilizing mission and enabled the praxis of the mission.

Finally, the railway space also made the presence of foreigners visible to its occupants, particularly during the Allied occupation. Sometimes Iranian railway travelers developed a sense of their belonging through their encounters with foreigners. In 1945, Mohammad Arjomand, the former personal telegraphist to Reza Shah traveled from Tehran to Iraq, departing from Tehran Station to Ahvaz by train. During his railway journey, he had the pleasant experience of getting to know other Iranian and Iraqi passengers.[513] His experience was not entirely pleasant, however. He also encountered the aloof attitude of British passengers, both military and civilian, who "did not speak a word" to him and other passengers both in a small railway compartment and an even smaller car.[514] British passengers may have been orderly like the imagined European

512 Daneshvar, *Didaniha*, 9 and 20.
513 Arjomand, *Shesh Sal*, 261.
514 Ibid., 262 and 266.

first-class passengers. Yet, that did not impress the Iranian traveler. He expected passengers to chat and share food during the journey, just like Iranian passengers around him did. Therefore, encounters with foreign passengers in the railway space could allow modern middle-class Iranians to articulate their differences from foreign passengers, create a vernacular behavioral code in the railway space, and reaffirm their Iranian modernist sensibilities that separated them from both the Iranian masses and foreigners. Thus, modern middle-class travelers after 1938 did not necessarily embody the railway traveler prototype constructed prior to 1938 as the replica of imagined European travelers in first-class cars. Rather, various encounters with both Iranians and non-Iranians continued to create new understandings of the self among Iranian railway travelers.

Conclusion

The railway space provided its occupants with a distinct experience. Contrary to the modernists' imagination of a homogeneously Europeanized travelers, the Iranian railway space came to embody divisions and hierarchies of the nation. Travelers encountered different, and even competing, uses of the railway space among groups that were divided along various lines, including socioeconomic status, cultural orientation, religiosity, and ethnicity. For modern middle-class travelers, the railway space simultaneously reinforced their urge to learn more about the national community of Iran and made them aware of the difference from their distinct cultural orientation from other segments of society.

The case of semi-colonial Iran differed from other historical contexts in several ways. Most obviously, the belated arrival of the railway meant that some of the

controversial questions such as the mingling of men and women in the public space had been discussed prior to the opening of the railway, unlike the case of colonial India. Since the railway opened after the entrance of veiled women in the public space in the 1920s, followed by their forced unveiling in 1936, debates about gender relations in the railway space did not receive as much attention as elsewhere. Furthermore, the collapse of the central state in 1941 and the Allied Occupation that continued until 1945 made the Iranian case rather unusual. While railway projects in independent nations often materialized in the context of nation-building, in Iran's case, the process of nation-building was interrupted by the occupation, which restricted civilians' mobility. In response to such restrictions, local populations sometimes came up with solutions to these challenges by freeloading or petitioning. Moreover, the occupation radically increased the presence of resented foreign occupiers such as the British in the railway space, which may have impacted the way Iranians shaped their understandings of the self as indicated by the example of Arjomand.

After the end of the occupation, especially in the second half of the twentieth century, the Trans-Iranian Railway faced greater competition from other modes of transport and gradually became less important in Iranians' travel experiences. When the restriction on civilian highway use ended and the inflated fare for motorized vehicles subsided, the comparative advantages of the railway disappeared in the late 1940s. Furthermore, intercity bus service and civil aviation developed rapidly, giving travelers

options other than the railway system.[515] Yet, during the second quarter of the twentieth century, the Trans-Iranian Railway project and the new railway space played an important role in shaping understandings of the self among Iranian travelers, who encountered various passengers who visualized the heterogeneity of Iranian society. Moreover, travelers interacted with non-passengers such as Lor tribesmen who turned into beggars during the occupation and underpaid employees of the Railway Organization who received bribes from passengers. Although no evidence is available, it is conceivable that the railway space was also conducive to the shaping of understandings of the self among these groups. Thus, in the sense that it became the site for interaction among various segments of society, including vacationers, pilgrims, tribes, and railway workers, the Trans-Iranian Railway was a national project.

515 For aviation, see Abbas Atrush, *Tarikhcheh-ye Havapeima'i-ye Bazargani dar Iran: Az Aghaz ta Emruz* (Tehran: Entesharat-e Rowshangaran va Motaleʿat-e Zanan, 2007).

Conclusion

State projects that aim to creating a nation through transportation infrastructure still continue in post-revolutionary Iran, and the rail network of the Islamic Republic continues to expand.[516] In 2009, the same year that the Isfahan-Shiraz line opened, the line to link Kerman and Bam with Zahedan was completed. Zahedan, the capital of Sistan and Baluchistan Province, the home to Iran's Sunni minority and the separatist movement Jondollah, was finally connected to the rest of Iran instead of only to Pakistan. By extension, the line connected the Indian rail system with European ones through Iran, finally realizing the dream of railway enthusiasts like Henry Drummond Wolff, although the difference in gauge hampers direct service. With the presence of Iran's tricolor national flags and prominent political leaders, the official ceremony functioned as a great opportunity for the central government to display the firm grip of Tehran over the volatile province. In the ceremony, provincial institutions expressed their hope of increasing Iran's exports to Pakistan, thereby strengthening the national economy.[517] Moreover, the provincial government triumphantly proclaimed, "perhaps it (the coming of Iranian trains) was difficult to believe for the people of Sistan and Baluchistan. Until now, they

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[516] International networks expand, too. Most recently, Iran announced a plan to link Khorramshahr and Basra in the hope of facilitating pilgrimage and trade. For an article in Iranian Students' News Agency, see "Dastur-e Raʾis-e Jomhur baraye Ettesal-e Rah Ahan-e Khorramshahr beh Basreh," *ISNA*, December 10, 2014. http://www.isna.ir/fa/news/93091912077 (retrieved on March 18, 2015)

[517] "Eftetah-e Rah Ahan-e Zahedan – Bam, Afzayesh-e Saderat-e Gheir-e Nafti," *Sazman-e Sanʿat, Maʾdan va Tejarat-e Sistan va Baluchistan*, June 11, 2009. http://sbco.ir/main.asp?id=662 (retrieved on October 30, 2012)

have heard only the whistles of Pakistani trains while always anxiously waiting to hear the sound of Iranian trains' whistles."[518] Thus, provincial authorities celebrated the changes the new line would bring about in the economy as well as in the daily auditory experience of the local population, shared by Iranians elsewhere in the country, and thus symbolically proclaimed the integration of the province to the rest of Iran.

Yet, as the case of the Trans-Iranian Railway indicates, nation-building projects by the central government often lead to unintended consequences. The Trans-Iranian Railway project touched, albeit unevenly, many aspects of Iran's social whole. This dissertation has examined how various segments of state and society in Iran experienced the coming of railways from the beginning of the technological imaginary in the second half of the nineteenth century to the aftermath of the completion of the Trans-Iranian Railway in the mid-twentieth century. The coming of railways to Iran was not simply a result of Pahlavi state policies imposed on society, which was passively molded into homogeneously Europeanized citizens. Rather, various groups in society actively shaped the meanings of railways, took advantage of the opportunities railways presented, however ephemeral they might have been, and sometimes wove them into their understandings of the self, the community, and the nation. Thus, the project created multiple experiences with railway technology that did not necessarily lead to a singular national imagination.

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518 "Rah Ahan-e Kerman – Zahedan, Masiri baraye Tahavvol-e Sharq-e Keshvar," *Purtal- Ostan-e Sistan va Baluchistan*, February 8, 2012. http://www.sbportal.ir/fa/news/3998 (retrieved on October 30, 2012)

In fact, railways started to impact state and society in Iran long before the Majles ratified the Trans-Iranian Railway project in 1927. The transport revolution of the nineteenth century sparked interests in railway projects in Iran among European governments and entrepreneurs, particularly British and Russian, who dreamed of penetrating interior Iran for strategic and commercial purposes. At the same time, the transport revolution outside of Qajar dominion enabled Iranian travelers, mostly the Qajar political elite, to experience long-distance journeys more safely and speedily. As Naseri-period travelogues and treatises illustrate, while Iranian travelers in the Naseri period witnessed railways and experienced traveling by train in Europe, their first encounters with railways often occurred in Iran's surrounding world such as India, the Caucasus, Russia, and Egypt. These encounters gradually shaped Iranian travelers' specific understandings of railways that differed from the visions espoused in imperial railway projects. In terms of who should fund railway projects in Iran, the Qajar political elite initially assigned the role to foreign concessionaires. Yet, through observing other railways and railway proposals both inside and outside Iran, they increasingly found the involvement of Iranian capitalists more desirable. After the Constitutional Revolution, they considered the state responsible for railway construction. In terms of the goals of railway construction, the Qajar political elite came to emphasize creating a national economy with its center in Tehran. The notion of religiosity and animal-powered transport as antitheses to modernity also evolved through the same process of observation. Therefore, the Pahlavi state project of the Trans-Iranian Railway to connect the two seas via Tehran was the fruit of decades of imaginations by the Qajar political

elite, whose mobility allowed them to imagine an Iranian railway project based on both metropole and colonial experiences of railways, a benefit Iran enjoyed as a latecomer to the railway age.

Railway projects in independent states outside West Europe often took place in the context of centralization and nation-building, as illustrated by such cases as Japan after the Meiji Restoration, Mexico under Porfirio Diaz, Siam under Rama V, and Central Asia under Stalin. In this sense, Iran was typical, despite the belated arrival of railways. Constructing, operating, and using the Trans-Iranian Railway in the second quarter of the twentieth century intensified state-society and intra-social interactions within the context of Reza Shah's attempts at centralization and nation-building. The interactions could take many different forms. For instance, since the Trans-Iranian Railway employed about 50,000 workers at the peak of construction during the 1930s, it kept tribes along the railway route on the payroll and functioned to reduce the risk of rural insecurity when such Pahlavi policies as forced sedentarization impoverished nomadic tribes. Nevertheless, some tribes, such as the Bayranvands, were excluded from employment and were targeted for forced relocation to other provinces. Whereas Iran's nationalist historiography tends to explain their exclusion by stressing their complete defiance to state presence, I have pointed out that the Bayranvands in fact tried to evaluate the circumstances presented by the railway project. They even demanded their inclusion in reaping the benefits of railway construction rather than being forced into destitution through the imposition of a sedentarized agricultural lifestyle.

Among the included tribal groups such as the Papis, while some construction laborers maintained their livestock, others became fulltime laborers paid directly by the contractors, who were in turn supervised by the Scandinavian consortium authorized by the Ministry of Roads to oversee the project. Construction laborers were sometimes socialized into the workers' world and made demands along with other workers for better working conditions and compensation by petitioning various state institutions and protesting on construction sites. Importantly, the presence of European workers contributed to the shaping of specific demands that Iranian workers made, indicating that the difference in their contractual status may have contributed to the way workers perceived themselves. Moreover, interaction with state institutions did not necessarily disappear after the forced abdication of Reza Shah in 1941 and the subsequent period of chaos. On the contrary, petitioners felt safer filing complaints without worrying about the ramifications of their actions, and thus the number of petitions increased after the summer of 1941.

Railway workers, whose origins were more heterogeneous and transnational than hitherto acknowledged, also interacted with various state institutions, especially the Railway Organization, Iran's largest state organization at the time. Immediately following the end of the Allied occupation in 1945, the Organization faced the growing presence of the Tudeh Party among workers, with its own apparatus of socializing workers into the world of Tudeh followers. In response, the Railway Organization attempted to mold railway workers into loyal employees by providing various perquisites and monopolizing the site of social interaction. Moreover, in the official narrative, the

Organization included the Trans-Iranian Railway's contribution in advancing the Allied causes in World War Two while concluding that workers should be proud of the Organization because of this contribution. As workers' petitions demonstrated, however, Iranian railway workers used the same narrative of their contribution in war efforts but concluded that they, the workers, deserved a better life and made demands of the Railway Organization in terms of their working and living conditions in the postwar period. Therefore, rather than being molded into loyal employees of the Organization, railway workers actively engaged in defining their place in relation to the Iranian nation and the national project of the Trans-Iranian Railway.

The coming of the Trans-Iranian Railway created the new railway space. It was in this public space that heterogeneous groups in the Iranian nation interacted. Despite the Iranian modernists' insistence on creating a homogeneously Europeanized railway space, the railway space of the Trans-Iranian Railway came to embody hierarchies and divisions within Iranian society. As the embodiment of the Iranian nation, the railway space came to be occupied by various groups, including modern middle-class vacationers, pilgrims, communists, British officers, Lor beggars, corrupt conductors, and Dezfulis who did not believe they were "Iranian." As the cases of modern middle-class travelers indicated, they simultaneously identified themselves with the larger Iranian nation while, as the modern-middle class with specific cultural sensibilities, separating themselves from the rest of the occupants of the space. Thus, travelers also shaped understandings of the self through intra-social interaction in the new railway space.

In these interrelated narratives of how Iranian society experienced the coming of railways, transnational connections played a significant role. Throughout this dissertation, I have paid particular attention to a few specific cases, including Naseri-period Iranian travelers, the large presence of skilled workers from various parts of Europe, and the origins of first-generation Iranian railway workers. Additionally, I have mentioned such examples as the large number of Iranian railway passengers heading to the holy cities in Iraq, which exemplified how the national project of the Trans-Iranian Railway facilitated pilgrimage across borders. Also, based on their experiences of traveling by train in Iraq, returned pilgrims complained to the Iranian State Railway about the restrictions on ticket sales. These examples demonstrate the importance of the spatial mobility of non-state actors who traveled abroad. They also illustrate that Iranians had multiple opportunities to encounter railway technology outside Iran precisely because of the belated arrival of railways to Iran. While technological interactions initiated by the Pahlavi state were often with Europe and America, non-state actors witnessed and experienced railways in India, Iraq, Egypt, Russia, the Caucasus, and Anatolia in addition to Europe. In some cases, travelers experienced railway technology in such distant places as Japan.[519] Therefore, in order to understand the history of technological interactions after the transport revolution of the nineteenth century, historians need to embrace a more global framework that goes beyond the overemphasis on encounters between Iran and the West. Although Iranians often equated the possession of railway technology with European modernity, as this

519 For Qajar-period Iranian travelers to Japan, see Hashem Rajabzadeh, "Japan as Seen by Qajar Travelers," in Elton L. Daniel ed., *Society and Culture in Qajar Iran: Studies in Honor of Hafez Farmayan* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2002), 285-310.

dissertation has illustrated, Iranians' imaginations of and experiences with railway technology occurred on a much broader scale.

Admittedly, the experiences that can be reconstructed from available sources are tantalizingly fragmented. We still do not know the origins of the vast majority of early railway workers. Petitions by displaced landowners and disabled laborers often do not tell us what happened in the end. Nevertheless, this dissertation has demonstrated that the coming of railway technology, the imagined essence of modernity, did not create a singular narrative in Iran. The heterogeneity of the ways in which various segments of Iranian society understood and used the Trans-Iranian Railway attests to the active engagement of individuals and groups in assessing the constantly changing circumstances, be they political, economic, or cultural, in modern Iran.

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